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# YELLOW SOULS



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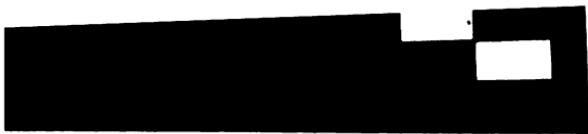
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**TO**  
**HERMOINE**  
**MY SISTER AND COMRADE**





**YELLOW SOULS**

## **NOTE**

The author wishes it to be distinctly understood that all the characters in this novel are purely imaginary, and do not refer to living persons.

# YELLOW SOULS

## CHAPTER I

A SON, a son, my God, what a triumph!" Doctor Leland wondered at the suppressed excitement that blazed from the eyes of the newly made father; he could not know that the birth of this male child was a thing the great self-made banker had set his heart on, not for reasons that moved ordinary men to this natural desire—Otto Friedrich Schultz was no ordinary man.

And now sitting in the sumptuous library of his town house, where only the occasional jingle of bells sounded as hansoms rolled through Berkeley Square, Mr. Schultz gave himself up to the luxury of reverie, to him a most unusual proceeding. How well things were coming his way!

This was indeed a triumph, this was another moment to be marked as an episode in his career, and such a career! Mr. Schultz smiled, he thought of a little lady who had sat next him at a dinner-party a few nights since. It had been an intimate gathering and the conversation had turned on the lives of friends, both present and absent ones.

"Oh, really," this small butterfly lady pouted, "I do wish people would not talk about themselves, it is such dull hearing, each one thinks he or she has had a most unusual and amazing life, everyone is sure their own very ordinary existence would make novel reading, when in reality we have all lived much the same lives,

had much the same experiences, have we not, Mr. Schultz?"

And Mr. Schultz had smiled as he agreed with her, just as he was smiling now at the thoughts which her remark caused. He could imagine the incredulous horror of these well-born, well-fed butterflies had he outlined for their delectation the events that brought him into their midst.

It seemed as though he had always known how to shape his career; from the time he was a tiny child in Berlin he could not remember when he had not fostered the notion of saving up and coming to England.

Well, it was eighteen hundred and ninety-one now, just twenty years since he, a pale gawky youth of seventeen, had realised his ambition and stepped on English soil.

He visualised the seventeen-year-old Otto Friedrich he had been, as in memory he retrod that amazing walk from Charing Cross to Camden Town. It had been very early in the morning when he had gone direct to Mrs. Bloggs, No. 6, Tully Street, Camden Town, the only address he knew in London, or for the matter of that in England; it had been given him by a cousin of his mother's who had once stayed in London, at the establishment of the admirable Mrs. Bloggs.

How he hated London on that cold drizzly November morning! How he resented the fact that no one could speak German! A bitter resentment had swelled his heart when some workmen of whom he asked direction guffawed loudly at his very broken guttural rendering of the English words, and that resentment had never died.

He ultimately arrived at No. 6, Tully Street, and knocked at the door with never a pause to consider afresh what he should say. The tempting smell of cooking assailed his nostrils and he knew he was hungry, for he had eaten nothing for over fourteen hours now, not because he could not pay for it, he had one hundred

marks in good German money strapped securely to his waist, but this sum was to be kept intact, as the beginning of the fortune he was to make in England.

Receiving no answer Otto Friedrich knocked again; this time slow heavy footsteps approached and the door was thrown open.

It was Mr. Bloggs himself in his shirt sleeves who stood looking down at Otto.

"I come for the room, yes?" Otto framed the well learned words slowly and gutturally.

"Come for a room are you, now?" Mr. Bloggs made no move to admit his would-be guest.

"*Ja*, the room, four shillings sterling per weekly, Herr Lobenfeld he tell me, *ja*."

"Oh, Mr. Lobenfeld," echoed Mr. Bloggs. "'Ere, wife, there's a furriner come after a room, let's on 'e's a friend of Mr. Lobenfeld's." Still the way was barred and Otto Friedrich received no invitation to enter.

Mr. Bloggs scratched his head hard, but even that did not seem to help his brain work, to solve the situation.

"La, Bloggs, you know I'm full, and likely to be," and a fat, cleanly form hove in sight, scarlet of face, sleeves rolled far above the elbows; in her hand Mrs. Bloggs carried a huge two-pronged black-handled fork. Then followed a colloquy, the upshot being that "the sassiges would burn" and that she "couldn't take no one in, be it ever so."

Despite Mrs. Bloggs' asseveration, Otto Friedrich stood his ground doggedly, repeating that his friend Herr Lobenfeld had told him he would get rooms there.

Eventually Otto was invited to enter and sit in the kitchen and the heart of the plump landlady was touched to the extent of yielding.

"A bite to eat, and set and rest, and I'll jest finish up with Bloggs' breakfast and run across to No. 11 and speak to me dear friend Mrs. Toddles, 'oo knows but what she can do for you."

And when an hour later Otto Friedrich in the solitude

of Mrs. Toddles' second floor back, had reflectively emptied his pockets of divers bits and pieces, including three inches of tallow candle and a small square of yellow soap, which he had purloined from Mrs. Bloggs' kitchen while she had been absent on her errand to Mrs. Toddles, he concluded that although his present abode was to cost him an extra sixpence a week more than he had expected to pay, still he could make it up by taking advantage of Mrs. Bloggs' hearty invitation to "look in at No. 6 and take me and Bloggs as you find us and let us 'ear 'ow you're doin'." And so he would "look in" about meal times and his sense of justice would be satisfied, for she should have had a room for him, failing that she should have arranged with Mrs. Toddles to give him the same terms as he had been led to believe he would have got at No. 6.

The ensuing weeks were spent in grim endeavours to find employment and to leave untouched his one hundred marks.

For every rebuff he vowed mentally that someone, some day, should pay dearly. Each morning as he passed St. Paul's Cathedral on his way through the City, Otto Friedrich would pause in order to shake his clenched fist at the stately dome for which he had conceived a spiteful resentment.

One desperate morning when he had decided he could no longer hold out without breaking into his precious capital, old William Edgecumbe, ledger clerk to John Thompson and Company, Shipping Agents and Bankers, had given him an apple to soften the "No work here for you, young gentleman;" and Otto Friedrich chuckled even yet after thirty years, as he remembered how he had helped old Edgecumbe search for a pair of slippers that Mrs. Edgecumbe had insisted he should keep at the office to change into on these slushy cold mornings.

"It is here I always put them, and it's here they should be," wailed the old man, indicating a corner behind a huge mahogany cupboard; "far be it from me to suspect

anyone of thieving, but I have always had my doubts, my strong suspicions as to the honesty and integrity of Mrs. Toom, the charing woman."

William Edgecumbe did not find his slippers. Otto Friedrich wondered later in the day, while eating a meat pasty for which he expended two pennies out of the one shilling and fourpence the Jew had given him for the slippers, how the old man could have been so blind as not to see his foot-gear lying deliberately under his nose, then as he thoughtfully nibbled the core of the apple he determined to return on the morrow and force an opening somehow in the John Thompson Company. And this is what he actually did do, aided by the unsuspecting Mr. Edgecumbe who, so long as he remained with the firm, spoke of Otto Friedrich as an obliging young gentleman.

Soon after he had firmly installed himself in this City office he communicated with a German agent residing in England, whose unadvertised occupation was the reception of stray bits of information which might prove of use to the Fatherland, from whom young Schultz received remuneration, which increased as time rolled by and he became of greater value to Germany.

Slowly, oh, very slowly, but with dogged persistence he had risen step by step. He went over them now in his mind. Each small success was to him an achievement, not a triumph of a moment, but a step that mounted him higher, that brought him nearer his desire, until eventually he owned the John Thompson Co., rechristened the English Bank.

And now he had a son, an English son, the one thing that money could not buy. Oh indeed fate was on his side!

An English son, born of an English mother, just as he had planned ten years ago when he first saw Lady Mary Cranleigh, daughter of the impecunious Duke of Shadford. She had floated haughtily past him, leaning on the arm of her father, and then and there the rising

young clerk Schultz had vowed in his mind that this aristocratic English woman must become the mother of the son he saw he would need to further his life's work.

It had been a bad blow six months later to read of her marriage. Later he heard that she had given birth to a girl child; then, three years ago, her husband the Marquis Mallaby had died of fever somewhere in Africa.

Early in his career Mr. Schultz had realised the need of a knowledge of women as well as that of men, in order to succeed. He used that wisdom now, and by sheer force of will the Marchioness Mallaby was led to the altar for the second time.

"After all" (this opinion was expressed in her Ladyship's set, by her intimate friends), "poor dear Mary is very lucky, this Schultz man has pots of money, and Mary is her father over again in spending money, and he seems positively devoted to his stepchild."

Quite true, he had already tabulated eight-year-old Lady Mary the second, in his mind; he foresaw that properly handled she could prove extremely useful in his scheme of things; therefore this small cog in the machinery was treated with every consideration, which led her to show respect and a certain degree of liking for a very generous step-parent whom she called Father Frederick.

And now a son, an English son! Every muscle grew taut, his brain had never been clearer, he looked ahead, always ahead, and planned accordingly.

He had money, yes, but he must have more; he had power, but he must have more and more power. The next twenty years would be busy ones; he must make great strides, and by God he would!

## CHAPTER II

**A** LADY to see you, Sir Frederick."

"Name?"

"She gave none, said you were expecting her."

"Just so, show her in, Trent, see that I am not disturbed while she is here."

"Very good, sir."

In a few moments Trent returned, ushering into the banker's private office the lady of whom he had spoken. John Trent had been secretary to the great Sir Frederick Schultz for over eighteen years now, he knew his master as well as anyone did, and never needed to be told twice to obey an order. Many queer people visited this office. Mr. Trent had no curiosity as to the object of these calls, he was very well paid, and proud of his position as confidential secretary to one of the most influential men in the City of London.

"Good morning, be seated." Sir Frederick did not offer his hand in greeting.

"Good morning, Cousin Otto."

As soon as she had spoken Emily Lemberg knew she had made a mistake, although to even a keen observer no sign to that effect was visible on the face of the man she addressed.

"Your husband, as you know, is employed by me to attend to certain matters in Germany, and to pay me visits from time to time. He was instructed by me six years ago, when my son was born, to find a trustworthy woman who spoke English perfectly, and to have her ready to enter my service when I needed her; he suggests you."

"Yes, Gustav told me, I have studied diligently, I

do not think you will find any fault with my English."

"That being so, I will outline my wishes; briefly they are that you change your name, and become Mrs. Clarke, that you never mention Germany or speak one word of German."

"That I change my name to Mrs. Clarke, and never mention Germany or speak one word of German," repeated the drab-faced, flat-chested woman, as though learning her instructions by heart.

"You have brought nothing with you from Germany?"

"Only a small handbag, I have obeyed your orders."

"Dispose of the handbag and its contents, purchase a second-hand trunk and English clothes, get rid of everything you have brought with you including the garments you are wearing. Is that clear?"

"Yes."

"Your plaid costume, your boots, bonnet, veil, are very German; burn them, sell them, destroy them, but do not keep them."

"May I send them back to your—my aunt?"

Sir Frederick frowned, he knew that she had been about to say "your mother," and for an instant he wondered whether he was not making a mistake in bringing a relative into his household. The fleeting thought vanished, after all he had to employ some such person, and Emily Lemberg and her husband were wholly dependent on him, they could be trusted to serve their own interests by obeying him implicitly.

"Yes."

"Thank you—Sir Frederick."

"That is right, Mrs. Clarke, it is better we should both forget the kinship that exists between us. Next Monday an advertisement will appear in the *Times* for a nursery governess, the applicants are to apply by letter to my secretary, Mr. Trent, you will remember the name?"

"Mr. Trent, yes."

"He will bring the letters to me, I will take them to my wife, and will suggest her answering your application. I

hope you will manage to secure the position without my intervention."

"I will do my best—sir."

"You are to devote yourself exclusively to the care of my son, Master Frederick, you are to teach him, and to take him for his outings in the Park; you are to instruct him to observe, to realise the importance of trifles, also he must learn to keep his own counsel. Always take care to speak well of the English, but in a discreet way let him see their defects. You follow my meaning?"

"Perfectly." The German woman's little pale blue eyes shifted behind her large iron-rimmed spectacles from the banker's face and appeared to focus themselves on her small thick red blob of a nose; the only time she closed her mouth was when she was carefully framing words, at other times she breathed stertorously through it.

"You will learn that every evening at six o'clock the child is brought to me, see that he is in my study punctually. Your pay will be good. That is all. Good morning, Mrs. Clarke."

Ten minutes later Sir Frederick was deep in a conference with four Elder Brethren of Trinity House, as to the desirability of building a lighthouse off the Isle of Wight.

"I quite see your point, Captain Rowe, it is a good one, and inclines me to agree with you that a lighthouse at that particular spot is much needed."

Captain Rowe felt a pleasurable glow of satisfaction at the deference shown him by the great financial king, although, hang it all, he could not for the moment recall what his point had been, nor exactly when he had made it; still it must have been a good one. Captain Rowe acknowledged the tribute paid him by a silent inclination of his head.

"It seems to me a tomfool idea and a colossal waste of money. I did not hear Rowe's point, so do not know whether it was a good or bad one, but what I want to

know is, what the devil is the use of such a lighthouse? If your ships went through the air, Schultz, instead of on the water, then I would say erect the building, it would be a jolly fine guide for them." Bluff old Lord Andrew guffawed heartily at his own witticisms, which were not so far-fetched as he thought, for it was in truth a future signal for German airships that the banker was planning.

"Not my idea, Lord Andrew, I am merely putting the project before you as it was sent to me. As to the money, I am sure if the lighthouse was deemed necessary I could find ways and means of raising the entire sum."

"'Pon my word you're a marvel, Schultz, I believe you could raise money for the Resurrection if it was wanted; a marvel, that's what you are, full of brains and money. I suppose it is because you are German?"

"Hardly a marvel and scarcely German, Lord Andrew." Oh! Sir Frederick was suave, but could the Elder Brethren have read his vicious thoughts, they would have wondered at the calm, smiling countenance that faced them.

"But hang it all, Schultz, you are German."

"I am English. I left Germany when I was a mere child, and became naturalised twenty years ago. Now, shall we definitely abandon this project?"

Sir Frederick carried his point, as he had firmly intended doing, and eventually the Elder Brethren became enthusiastically unanimous in their desire to have a light-house built off the Isle of Wight.

This incident with several others of a similar character were items included in despatches to a very high personage in Germany, which were sent off on the following day by the faithful Gustav Lemberg, husband of "Mrs. Clarke."

Nothing was too large, nothing was too small, nothing must be overlooked that might help on the great "day."

"You will want to get away early to-night, eh, Trent?"

"That is all right, Sir Frederick," Mr. Trent replied.  
"It is only five o'clock."

"But this is the first Monday in the month, the night I believe you told me on which you held your Debating Society meeting."

"Quite true, sir, how wonderful of you to remember such a trifle."

"Not at all, I have always endeavoured to interest myself in the affairs of my staff."

"Well we know it, and I can assure you, Sir Frederick, we deeply appreciate the fact."

"Interesting discussion on to-night?"

"It should be, sir; we have Admiral Todder, retired, you know; he is taking the chair, and James Coolie is going to speak on economics."

"That seems to be a favourite topic at the moment. I was reading quite a sound article on the subject in some magazine, written by a man who appeared to be a deep thinker; he pointed out the futility of an Island like ours spending such colossal sums on the upkeep of an army, sheer wanton waste he termed it. England never has depended on her land forces, and will never need them. Men join the army and spend the best years of their lives in learning to march in step and form fours, then when they are too old to learn a trade they are turned adrift and finish up in the workhouse. His argument was that the money spent on the upkeep of a useless army could be profitably employed in teaching them to become good artisans. The common sense of it appealed to me; I daresay you have thought the same way yourself?"

"Well, come to think of it, sir, the thought has crossed my mind, in fact it would make a good subject for a debate."

"So it might. Well, good-night, Trent."

"Good-night, Sir Frederick, and thank you. By the way, will you see Willis, he is waiting outside, says he has come up from Liverpool purposely to consult you."

## YELLOW SOULS

"Better send him in, I can only give him five minutes."

"I am sure he will be very grateful. Good-night, sir."

Samuel Willis was a leading finder of trouble, not on his own behalf, but for suffering humanity. He boasted that his own wife and children were more often starving than not, in fact he seemed to take quite a pride in the empty stomachs and shoeless feet of his family.

Once upon a time he had been a steady worker at his trade of shipbuilding; every Saturday night he had a hot tub and on Sunday regularly over-ate himself and wore a clean shirt like every self-respecting British workman. In those days his wife had lace curtains for her front windows, a harmonium, and a black silk best dress. She sang at her housework, as she planned how her little son Sam was to go to the shipping works like his father, and small Susie and Jane were one day to enter the gentry's service and earn good money, as she had done before she married.

That was before Willis learnt better from a loud-voiced tub-thumping gentleman, who spoke with a foreign accent to a crowd of attentive workmen, dilating on the grievances they never before knew they possessed. He drew comparisons for these poor down-trodden toilers between their lives and those of their employers; the latter rose late, attended to by countless minions, they ate and drank of the best, and rolled about in luxurious carriages purchased for them by the sweat of the dull, foolish working man's brow. The world had not been created for one class alone; comradeship, equal rights, and share alike was what they wanted, and what they should have.

It was fine-sounding talk, and fell on fertile soil.

It caused Samuel Willis to quit work; he was amazed to find, after some heavy pondering, what a lot of injustices he and his fellow-toilers were suffering under. Of course women are dull of comprehension, Mrs. Willis especially so, for to this day she cannot really see eye to eye with her lord and master. Like a loyal parrot she

quotes his stirring phrases and takes a fearsome pride in forbidding little Sam to touch his hat to the gentry; but now that the semi-detached villa with its lace curtains, harmonium, plush chairs and family Bible, its stuffed canary under a glass case, and its real parlour, are things of the ignorant past, she is weak enough to shed tears, as she slops dispiritedly about her work in the two rooms to which the Willis family in upholding its ideals is reduced. The children are no longer in danger of a clout over the head if mother catches them playing in the gutter with "quite common children." Mother is too busy these days trying to dodge the rent man to care much what Sam and Susie and Jane are doing, so long as they keep from under her feet and don't bother her.

Sir Frederick Schultz was the only one of the masters for whom Mr. Willis had any time, to quote his own words:

"That there Sir Frederick may be a baronite and one of the rich, but 'e ain't no oppressor, 'e reckernises brains when 'e meets them, 'e does."

This was after the banker had paid a visit to the Liverpool docks a few weeks following Samuel's "down tools" decision, and had paused a moment to listen to the tail end of a harangue which the ex-workman was making at a street corner to a group of (what he termed) "slaves."

"Ah, Willis," Sir Frederick said, as that worthy, exhausted by his own verbosity, descended from the soapbox on which he had been standing, "I hear you have left our works; a pity, for you are a fine worker; still, I well know that a man who is born to be a leader of men must fulfil his vocation; brain is always more powerful than muscle. It is a pity you have discovered yours; a pity for us, I mean."

During the years that followed Willis found no cause to change his opinion of Sir Frederick, for he found a sympathetic listener on the several occasions, such as the present, when he visited the banker.

"I've come to you for a bit of advice, Sir Frederick,"

confessed Samuel, "it's personal like; you see it's this way, I give up a steady job and sackererficed a good little 'ome because I felt a call so to speak to 'elp my fellow workmen better their positions. Don't think I'm complainin', because I ain't, though me and the missus and the kids is roostin' in a couple of attic rooms, rent paid irregerlar. I could stand that, but what gets me beat is that while I'm livin' in poverty 'ere's the very chaps what I'm out to 'elp, goin' on drawin' their steady wages, and ain't got no more spirit than to keep on bein' slaves."

"But I have always understood an agitator received a princely remuneration."

"Them as has joined up with Societies and Unions gets good pay, but I don't 'old with all of what they sez, so I'm what you might call a free lance. Now what do you advise, sir? Of course," here Samuel's face took on an embarrassed and somewhat sheepish expression, "I know I could go back to my old job at the yard, best rivetter they've ever 'ad, I was, though I sez it as shouldn't; they're wantin' men bad, they're layin' down the keels for two new liners this week. Now what do you say, sir?" As plainly as he could, without actually saying it, the poor half educated thing was begging to be shown a way to go back to his trade, without undue sacrifice of his pride. With jaws clenched, pleading eyes, and hands twisting his cap, he waited. Sir Frederick laughed, a nice easy little amused laugh.

"But why come to me, Willis? To be perfectly candid, am I to advise you in the interests of the masters, 'monied hogs,' I think you call us, or in those of the men? You know my opinion. I have constantly urged you to go back to your trade, I have told you that there always has been, and always will be a fight between labour and capital, and whoever has grit enough to stick out longest must win."

"Grit enough to stick it out, eh?" and the pleading in Samuel's eyes gave place to one of dogged determination.

"Go back to your job, Willis, like a sensible chap. What does it matter to you whether the conditions for the working man remain the same or are improved; after all, you will be getting a good living wage, enough to take you back to your own little home instead of two rooms."

"No no, sir, that ain't my way, I don't care for myself. Of course the missis and the kids—but sackererfices 'ave to be made and someone's got to make them, and I for one'll show I've got the grit to stick it out."

"What an obstinate chap you are," frowned the banker, then he sighed. "I do wish you would go back to your employment; more and more men are abandoning the works every day. It would be idle for me to pretend such a state of affairs is not causing us grave inconvenience; in fact a secret conference of the Masters is called for this week. Now, Willis," his tone was stern, "you have come to ask my advice; go back to your work, man."

"No, Sir Frederick, I think not. I am sorry to 'ave troubled you, but some'ow I feels like we're getting forwarder towards our goal as it were. Good-night, and thank you, sir, for seein' me."

"Damn you, Willis, you are an obstinate chap; it is men like you that cause all these strikes," was Sir Frederick's parting remark.

In which circumstances it is not to be wondered at that Mr. Willis never associated the banker with the anonymous postal order he received some days later, which encouraged him and gave him fresh zest for his self-imposed task of fighting the masters and disorganising trade.

Nothing was too large or too small for Sir Frederick Schultz to tackle, in the great cause to which he had dedicated his life. As his carriage bore him towards Berkeley Square in time for the usual six o'clock rendezvous with his son, he contemplatively reviewed the events of his ordinary day and was content.

### CHAPTER III

**G**OOD EVENING, Frederick."

"Good evening, Farver."

Every night just as the clock was striking six, since the child could lisp, this had been the recognised greeting between father and son.

"Well, what has happened to-day?"

"Nana has gone away."

"Where to?"

"Back to her bruvver's place."

"And where is that?"

"To Bristol, where there's a lot of ships."

"And what else?"

"Big places where they build ships."

"Very interesting; well, and what else?"

"She tooked two tin boxes wi' her and a lot of parcels, and a bag; I don't know what was in them, but Rose said she 'members Nana comin' here and she only bringed one teeny weeny box wiv her."

"Really?"

"Yes, and she wored her new dress and she kissed me and cried."

"And what did you do?"

"I eated the choclut what C'arke gived me."

"Who is Clarke?"

"My new Nana, I fink, she's eyes is all watery."

"Oh."

"Yes, and she's boots squeak 'cos they's new and got a lot of buttons. Rose doesn't like C'arke."

"Did she say so?"

"No, but I sawd Rose all wrinklin' up she's face when C'arke speaked to her."

"What did you do?"

"Nuffing, on'y told C'arke I loved Rose."

"Do you love Rose?"

"Not erzackerly."

"Then why did you tell Clarke you did?"

"So's she'd give me some more choclut to make me love her."

"And did she give it to you?"

"Mm." This accompanied by an affirmative nod of the sleek narrow little head.

"Then did you tell her why you had said you loved Rose?"

"Noooo, 'cos then she wouldn't have gived me some more. She tooked me in the Park."

"What did you see?"

"I seed Wobins and Marfa, she tooked his arm."

Later, when it drifted to Sir Frederick's ears that Martha, the sixth housemaid, was "in trouble," the household was electrified at his curt command to Mrs. Birt, the housekeeper, to send for Robins, the second footman, and see that he married the girl; no one could think how the Master knew that the couple had been "walking out."

This hour alone with the small Frederick was no idle one, for while teaching his son to be a keen observer and to turn what he saw to his own advantage, incidentally he learned much of what was taking place under his own roof.

"And what else happened?"

"I sailed my new boatie."

"Did she sail all right?"

"No, she falled over in the water. C'arke tried and I tried, but she on'y falled over."

"Too bad, I'll get you another one."

"I've got annovver one, I tooked Bernie's."

"And what did Bernie say to that?"

"I gived my boat to Bernie."

"Oh, an exchange. Well, how did Bernie's boat behave?"

"I sailed it wound and wound and wound, and so Bernie wanted his boat back."

"Did you give it to him?"

"No."

"What happened?"

"Bernie cried."

"Ah."

"Mm, so I hided the boatie behind C'arke and telled Bernie it had got drownded."

"Did you think of that yourself?"

"Not erzackerly, C'arke telled me. She said all the little boys and girls in the Park was silly."

"And are they?"

"I gotted Bernie's boatie."

"Have you seen your Mother to-day?"

"Mm, Mummie was cryin' too."

"What made her cry?"

"I fink it was Uncle Ken."

"What had he done?"

"I don't know. Farver, show me the pictures."

"In a moment. Tell me what your Mother said?"

"Nuffing."

"I suppose she was speaking to—Uncle Ken?"

"Mm. Uncle Ken taked her hand and Mummie tooked it away and cried."

"Then what happened?"

"Uncle Ken said wasn't it my beddiebyetime?"

"And what did you say?"

"Mummie said I was comin' to you, and what did we say?"

"Did you tell her?"

"Mm, I telled her you showed me the pictures. Can I see the pictures now?"

"Here they are." Rising and taking down from a well-filled bookshelf a large volume and bringing it back to where the child sat. "Did you tell them what the pictures were?"

"No, I jus' said pictures."

"That is right, for this is your and my secret, Frederick, and if ever you spoke to anyone about these pictures they would disappear for ever. It is only to me you must tell everything that happens, and so you will grow into a big strong man and have lots of picture books of your own, and real boats that you can get into and sail for yourself, but you can only have these things if you never tell anyone anything except me. Do you understand?"

"Mm, can I see the pictures?"

Sir Frederick was not at all sure how much the baby brain he was training actually assimilated during this daily hour; but he had determined to begin the teaching from the time the child could lisp, and he was doggedly persevering.

"This is a picture of the greatest man in the world. Whenever you see it say nothing, but stand up," and father and son gravely rose to their feet before the portrait of Wilhelm II. of Germany.

"This," resuming his seat and turning over the pages, "is one of the wonderful palaces where the great man lives."

"What's his name?"

"That you will learn when you can read; here is a picture of some of his soldiers."

"Oooh, like our sojers?"

"He has thousands and thousands more soldiers than we have."

"Wiv horses?"

"Yes, here is a picture of soldiers on horses."

"Wiv guns?"

"Yes, this," turning over the pages, "is one of the places where they make guns for this great man's soldiers. It is such a big place that you could not put it into the Park, and all the time guns and more guns are being made, all for this one great man."

"What for?"

"So that his soldiers may kill any wicked people who

come to try and take his beautiful country away from him."

"What for?"

"Oh, wicked people might want to come and steal it away from him one day, so he must have all his soldiers ready and all the guns ready for his soldiers to shoot the wicked robbers."

"Bang bang. I would shoot the wicked peoples."

"That is right, my son."

And so to the end of the book, when a fresh picture of Wilhelm in uniform seated on horseback brought the Schultz father and son once more to their feet.

Every evening it was the same, the only difference being in the books. For as the boy grew older, admiration for everything German and a contempt for everything English, was insidiously instilled into the avid, malleable brain.

No one dared intrude on this hour, not even wilful, determined little Lady Mary. She had ventured once, it was the only time she had ever seen her stepfather roused to anger.

It was a dull winter day and Marigold, as she was called to distinguish her from her mother, was frankly bored. She had gone to the nursery to play with small Frederick, forgetting it was his hour with his father. "Oh, bother," she had ejaculated on being told where her stepbrother was, "then I am going to the library too."

"Don't do that, Milady, the Master'd be rare annoyed if you was to disturb 'im, 'e's given strict orders that no one is to go there until 'e rings for Master Freddie to be brought away."

"Nonsense, he won't mind me." Without more ado Marigold had slid tomboyishly down the polished bannisters and with a roguish smile quietly entered the library.

"— it is the most beautiful country in the world," she heard.

"Oh, where? Are you telling him fairy stories, Father Frederick?" she asked.

"Marigold, how dare you come here?"

A cold white storm had assailed her, which ended in Baby Frederick being carried off by a hastily-summoned nurse, and in Lady Marigold being promptly sent to bed, where she sobbed herself to sleep.

The incident left a deep impression on her mind, a sense of injustice mixed with an inordinate curiosity as to the contents of the large scarlet-bound volume in which little brother Frederick took such an evident interest. She never again attempted to invade her step-father's sanctum.

## CHAPTER IV

THE Uncle Ken of whom little Freddie had spoken to his father was one Kendall Coolter, a Major eking out a bare existence on five hundred a year and his army pay. He was always in debt, always merry, a long fair lean Englishman with merry lazy blue eyes, and golden-red hair, which he kept close cropped to hide the crinkle in it.

Major Coolter had always loved Lady Mary Schultz; they played together when he was still in petticoats, and it was with the aid of his baby hand that she had first learned to toddle.

When he was nineteen and she two years younger, he told her of his love, which had grown and increased with every year, a hopeless love. Young as they were, they both realised that Mary was not meant for a poor young nobody. It was shortly after that, that her parents, discovering her in tears over young Coolter, were shocked into hastily marrying her to the Marquis Mallaby, who, though not wealthy, was at least better than Kendall.

The boy took his blow standing up, but it was a blow.

Later when he saw her contentedly married to Mallaby, he rejoiced for her sake, and the three of them, he, she and her husband, became the best of friends. He was in India when she became a widow, only returning to England after she had contracted her second marriage. They renewed their friendship, and never by word or look had he let her see that his love still lived as strongly as it had done when he was nineteen—never, until the day on which Freddie had told his father that “Uncle Ken tooked Mummie’s hand.”

It was quite true that Kendall had taken Lady Mary’s hand, but Freddie was wrong in his assumption that it

was Major Coolter who had been the cause of her tears; she was not a weeping woman, and this was the first time Kendall had seen her crying since she was seventeen; the sight distressed him and gave him food for deep thought.

Towards five o'clock he had dropped in at the Schultz residence. "Hullo, anything the matter?" he inquired a few minutes later as he took the cup of tea handed him by Lady Mary.

"Why do you ask, Kendall?"

"I don't know, something in your expression or something I don't know."

"Oh."

For a minute or so there was silence, the particular kind that can reign quite pleasurable between friends. Then:

"I want Marigold to remain my little girl." Lady Mary was evidently speaking from a tail end of thought.

"What's wrong with Marigold?"

"Nothing really, but——"

"Growing up too quick or something?"

"No, it is not anything so stupid, it's just that she wants to go to Germany."

"Whatever for?"

"To finish her education."

"What put that idea into her head?"

"Griselda Transome is coming to tea this afternoon," was the apparently irrelevant remark from Lady Mary.

"Griselda Transome, good lord, I haven't seen her for donkeys' years."

"Neither had I until we met her with Valerie, her daughter you know, at the Gatorie's dinner last week."

"What has Valerie grown into? I remember her as all long legs and pigtails."

"Quite a charming girl, a little bit on the heavy side, and very earnest, just come back from Germany, where she has been for two years studying music."

"Oh, ho, I see, and that has fired Marigold's ambition to go and do likewise."

"Yes."

"Well, what of it, girls have got to be finished somewhere, haven't they?"

"Yes."

"I see, you do not want her to go so far away."

"It is not that exactly."

"Look here, if you do not want her to go just tell her so, she is a good little soul, and would rather cut off her hand than distress you."

"She will go." Her tone was hopeless.

"Aren't you rather donning skis to walk up Constitution Hill?" quizzed Major Coolter gently.

"No, Kendall, no. Of course you think I am making mountains out of molehills, but I am not, I do not want Marigold to go to Germany."

"Then do not let her."

"Frederick wishes it."

"Schultz, eh! but hang it all, she is your daughter, not his, he cannot insist."

"He never does insist," Lady Mary's laugh had some unusual bitterness in it, that made her guest frown, "but we all do what he wishes us to."

"I thought you said it was Griselda's girl who had put this notion into Marigold's head."

"So it was. This is exactly what happened: Frederick took Griselda in to dinner at the Gatorie's—you know what Griselda is, she would talk the moan out of the sea, I do not wonder men like to escort her in to dinner, for all they need do is say an occasional 'really' or 'just so' and eat. She never stops talking. I know Frederick rather cultivates talking people, he prefers listening, but I felt quite sorry for him several times during dinner. Afterwards when the men came into the drawing-room, Frederick deliberately sought out Griselda, who, from the time we left the dining-room, had chattered incessantly, the theme of her prattle being Germany. At

Frederick's suggestion I invited her and Valerie to luncheon, they came last week, the day after Marigold returned home for her holidays, they both talked Germany, Germany, Germany, German methods, German thoroughness, German music, German literature, until I could have screamed."

"There are lots of people like that, you know, who having visited one country other than their own bring back with them a sort of glamour which makes them compare the weaknesses of their own birthplace with the virtues of the foreign spot, just like children to whom party bread and butter, which they cannot be coaxed to eat in their own nursery, tastes like god's food."

"Griselda and Valerie talked Germany, Marigold listened; Frederick——"

"Why blame him for Griselda's prattle?"

"He did it on purpose."

"What?"

"Put into Marigold's head the wish to visit Germany."

"Oh, I say; how?"

"He said little, he never does say much, but I have not been his wife for seven years without learning something of the man." Her tone was hard.

"Good lord!" Major Coolter was genuinely startled.  
"I thought you were happy, you appear to have everything that a woman can desire."

"I am very well kept, and I have Marigold."

"But your husband—the boy——"

"Frederick Schultz is the father of the boy, the boy is his father's."

"He is your son too?"

"He is my son inasmuch as I bore him, and brought him into the world, just as Frederick is my husband because we are legally married, but he is no more my husband than Freddie is my son, they are strangers to me. He married me for a purpose, he never does anything without a purpose. I fulfilled that end by giving him a son, since when I have become a glorified housekeeper, a

useful piece on his chessboard. I go cold with horror sometimes when I watch that hard perpetually scheming machine in human form, plotting, planning, working."

"For what?"

"That is what I ask myself. Worldly ambition I could understand, riches, title, honours, no, it is something more, and now my little Marigold is to be dragged on to the board, to be moved as he desires."

"To what end?"

"I know no more than you do, any more than I can explain to you why he has Freddie taken to him in his library every evening to teach him to watch, listen, report, and God knows what besides."

"That baby?"

"Freddie is no baby, he is the essence of cunning, Kendall." Lady Mary's voice was filled with horror. "Do you know I am beginning to feel a repulsion for that mite, my own child, is it not appalling?"

"My dear girl, aren't you a bit overstrung?"

"You have known me all my life, could you accuse me of hysteria, of inventing black shadows, of playing at being frightened?"

"You are the last woman in the world to whom I would have imputed any such tommy-rot, but really this all seems so nightmarish. What is it he is after?"

"I do not know, I am a simple English woman and try to look at things quite fairly."

"Schultz is kind to you?"

"Very, almost as kind as I am to my maid, excepting that I take an interest in her life, apart from her capacity as my servant."

"He might be a bit neglectful, but you must remember he is a busy man, he is one of England's leading bankers and cannot call his time his own."

"His neglect of me is one of the things I am most grateful for. There is always a price to be paid and I hate a whiner. I was no child when I married him, I can make excuses to myself, but they *are* excuses, the fact

remains that I was a matured woman at the time. Among other things, no doubt, wealth was part of the bait that dazzled me. Now, like any mean defaulter, I would shirk payment—if I could only pay in my own way—how many of us say the same thing."

"Let us look at this thing sensibly. You say Schultz neglects you—"

"No, no, that is not my trouble."

"I understand. Well, the boy; it is only natural that a father should want to know his own son, and if he prefers the kid to be brought to him instead of going for a romp in the nursery, there is no great harm in that, now is there?"

"Freddie never romps, he watches, listens, thinks, schemes, already he manœuvres with the cunning of an old man."

"He will grow out of that, wait till he goes to a public school, that will make a man of him," pronounced Major Coolter with an assurance he was far from feeling, as a picture of the cunning eyes and narrow head of the boy in question rose before his mental vision. "As to Marigold, after all she is not his daughter; tell Schultz you do not want her to go to Germany, put your foot down, my dear Mary. Come now, I am sure if you insisted you could get your way, just you tell him you will not let him ship her off as he pleases."

Lady Mary smiled wearily.

"You do not understand, Kendall—Frederick has never expressed a wish on the subject, that is not his way. I am developing a cunning which would surprise you, and when either Frederick or his boy make a seemingly commonplace remark I search rapidly for their motive. If Freddie wanted a sweet he would not ask directly, he would scheme to get it. Frederick arranged in an apparently casual way that Griselda and Valerie should inflame Marigold's imagination with pictures of German life, he put in a word here and there making Valerie compare English and German methods to the

advantage of the latter, and ridicule of the former. I saw the glint in his eyes, the quick twitch of his mouth when Marigold announced her intention of going to Germany. I recognised the signs, he had triumphed."

"Oh, hang it all, Mary, if you are so set against Marigold going away I will talk to her, she is too jolly fond of you to do anything that would hurt you."

"Marigold has a quiet insistence that generally wins her what she desires; once she determines to do a thing nothing deters her. Frederick will foster this wish, and I have a feeling that if she goes to Germany I shall never see her again."

"What do you mean?" The question was put sharply.  
"I cannot exactly tell you, but I feel much relieved in having spoken to you of my vague fears, so that should anything happen to me you can keep an eye on Marigold."

"Mary, what is it, aren't you well?"  
"Quite, but it is not only sick men who make their wills, a little foresight obviates big troubles. If anything should happen to me, Kendall, I know you would always stand by Marigold for her own sake, as well as mine."

"Of course I would." Major Coolter felt as awkward as any honest Englishman might in like circumstances. "But I think you are letting yourself grow morbid," and at the unusual sight of Lady Mary in tears he leant forward and took her hand. "Hang it all, Mary, don't do that."

This was the scene on which Freddie's eyes lighted, as he entered to spend a few minutes with his mother before being taken on to his father, and a description of it was faithfully carried into the library.

"Hullo, youngster, how are you?" Major Coolter turned with a smile to the grave-faced baby figure which stood in an attitude characteristic of him, unnaturally still, head poked forward, lids that drooped over long narrow eyes.

"Where's your moty-car?"

"At home in his stable; have you been in the Park to-day?"

"Mm, I'se got a sore foot."

"What is the matter with it, Freddie?" asked Lady Mary.

"It's sore."

"Come here," and Lady Mary held out her arms and lifted the child on to her knee.

"Which is the sore foot?"

"This one," indicating his left foot. "It gotted sore in the Park."

"Dear, dear, that is very bad of it," commiserated his mother, proceeding to strip the foot in question of its shoe and sock.

"Mm, it hurted me to walk. Will you take me for a wide in your moty-car, Uncle Ken?"

For the fraction of an instant Lady Mary paused in her task, then her face hardened, and quickly peeling the foot bare she examined it minutely.

"Of course I will, old chap, if your mother will trust you with me."

"May I go for a wide wiv Uncle Ken in his moty-car, Mummie?"

"No, you may not." Kendall was shocked at the harshness of her voice. "And," she continued as she rapidly replaced the shoe and sock with no gentle hand on the baby foot, "the next time you want anything, Freddie, ask for it like a man. There is nothing the matter with your foot; little boys who do not tell the truth are never loved, it is only horrid little cowards who tell stories."

"By Jove, do you mean to say the young beggar was kidding me? Well, I'll be hanged, but all children are schemers," he added hastily as he noted the expression on the mother's face.

As to Freddie, he accepted the ultimatum with stolid philosophy, making no protest or cry; he had failed;

## YELLOW SOULS

very well, he must do better next time, that was all. He was as glad when it was time to go to his father as his mother and Uncle Ken were for him to depart.

This incident, slight as it was, and Lady Mary's misgivings recurred to Kendall Coolter in years to come with deep significance.

## CHAPTER V

**M**Y dear Mary, a million apologies for being so late, but the concert was a huge success, encore after encore. Leinberger was too wonderful, he surpassed himself."

"I am glad you enjoyed it. You remember Kendall Coolter."

"How do you do, Mrs. Transome? Hullo, Marigold, and surely this is Valerie?" Major Coolter shook hands as he spoke, secretly wishing he could have made his escape before their arrival. The confidences he had just listened to, capped by the insight into little Frederick's nature, had disturbed him; he wanted to be alone and think. However, he was in for it, so he smiled amiably.

"Yes, I am Valerie, of course you are Major Coolter." Valerie's voice was deep and husky; it matched her tall broad-framed figure and her bronze eyes and hair; she wore Liberty clothes and believed in women "carving their own careers," whatever that cryptic phrase might mean.

"Kendall Coolter! How, how strange, yes, I remember you."

Mrs. Transome all but embraced him: she was like a Dresden shepherdess—a tiny figure of a woman, all pink and white and gold and blue; she chatted incessantly, and giggled delightedly when her overpowering daughter found it necessary to call her to order for some particularly thoughtless remark. She adored men whatever their age might be, and fluttered round Kendall, completely ignoring Lallie Rooper, a young and very blasé Guardsman to whom she had tenaciously clung all the afternoon.

"My dear, dear Kendall, how droll to meet you again, and here of all places in Mary's second home, or second husband's home I suppose I should say. Come and sit here beside me and tell me where you have been and all the exciting naughty things I am sure you have been doing. Mary, my dear, Leinberger played like an angel, like a veritable god, encore after encore, we simply could not get away. So good of you to trust your little Marigold with me, but then"—with a giggle—"you have another child, not like poor little me, who only have the one chick."

"Mother darling, I do hope you were not worried, but it was so thrilling, Herr Leinberger positively made the piano speak."

With a long golden plait over either shoulder, large blue-grey eyes and very soft pink cheeks, little Lady Mary in her tall slimness took Major Coolter back to a sunny June morning, seventeen years ago, when he had told his playmate he loved her; but Marigold's chin indicated a firmness, even an obstinacy of character, which her mother had never possessed.

"How is Transome?" inquired Major Coolter.

"Very well, at least I think so. I met him at a dinner-party last week. Oh, do not misunderstand me, my dear Kendall; Jerry and I are the best of friends, but although we share the same house, what with my engagements and his duties, whatever they might be, we very seldom meet. It is all so terribly sad, don't you think?"

Kendall knew exactly what he was supposed to say, just how sympathetic he was to be in giving utterance to—"terribly sad—for your husband" sort of thing. He expected the—"you delightful wicked creature," the giggle and the tap on the arm which he got, and he wondered if to this type of woman such remarks were like bread and butter—something of which one never tires.

His thoughts drifted, he scarcely heard the flow of babble that emanated from her lips.

"Mother darling, Valerie says there are thousands of

musicians in Germany every bit as good as Herr Leinberger, can you realise it?"

From her stool at Valerie's feet, where she sat with both hands locked tight round her knees, Marigold asked her question.

"Wonderful," there was no enthusiasm in Lady Mary's reply, "but my dearest child, you do not want to become a musician, do you?"

"No," and Marigold's words tumbled pell-mell in her eagerness, "but Valerie says everyone is so thorough there that she considers all the years spent in English schools simply wasted."

"There is no doubt that whatever the Germans undertake they do with all their strength; they are so earnest, so uplifting that one cannot but admire them," intoned Valerie.

"Wonder you did not marry one of the blighters," scoffed Lallie, who frankly stated that Valerie fascinated him by the very way she subjected him to the unusual process of snubbing, snubs which he joyously invited.

"A wonder, as you say. I would at least have found brain in a German husband," was her meaning retort.

"No, no, do not marry a German, Valerie," broke involuntarily from Lady Mary, who immediately bit her lips and frowned at her own impetuosity as she realised the interpretation that might be put on her words.

"Why not, Lady Mary?" then without waiting for a reply, "not that I have the slightest intention of marrying a German or anyone else for the matter of that."

"Meanin' me, I suppose," murmured Lallie, to Marigold's unmitigated delight.

"My lamb, what are you saying?" fluttered Mrs. Transome. "Of course you will marry, but not for some years." Valerie smiled scornfully, for her mother's daily, hourly admonition was "get married, get married, get married," coupled with stories containing vague morals about any girl who waited too long before fulfilling her

destiny—that of finding and capturing an eligible husband.

"Pray, Mary, why not a German? I am sure your own dear man is a perfect treasure!"

"Father Frederick is scarcely a German, Mrs. Transome, he is more interested in England and English things than anyone else I know."

It was Marigold who spoke, unconsciously saving her mother the embarrassment of a reply.

"The only un-English thing about him is that he cannot pronounce T. He says 'Bridish.'" The room rang with her mirth as she mimicked Sir Frederick. "He gets so cross when I tease him about it."

"But he is a German, never mind what his feelings are, that is one of the things that makes him such a fascinating person: you know I have quite lost my heart to him. By the way, where is he? In the City managing a bank or being a Member of Parliament or something strenuous and interesting, I suppose. Oh, we poor wives, what we have to sacrifice; our only consolations are our children, and they do not consider us, for they will grow up."

"They can do worse things than grow up," remarked Lady Mary.

"True, they can confer the indignity of grandparentage on us," complained Mrs. Transome.

"We did not study our parents in that respect, did we?" laughed her hostess.

"But, my dearest friend, consider the difference; think of our respected fathers and mothers with their lace caps, prim dresses, side whiskers and dull lives. Their very appearance screamed 'grandchildren'; think, only think of their figures, blatantly suggestive of red flannel, untrimmed calico, and as for their corsets—"

"Mother, really—"

"I cannot help it, Valerie. Do not hold me responsible for the way your grandmother dressed, and it is quite time we dropped this mock modest pose of being shocked

when corsets are mentioned; everyone knows we wear them, don't you, Kendall?"

"Well, I had suspected as much," smiled Major Coolter.

"Hum, I *have* heard that our sex is not the only one that bolsters its figure with whalebone, eh, Lallie?"

Mrs. Transome was in her element, the more shocked her "lamb" grew, the more her eyes sparkled with sheer love of mischief.

"I don't, give you my word I don't, Mrs. Transome," Mr. Rooper assured her solemnly.

"German women dress abominably," and so Valerie combined the double purpose of changing the trend of the conversation and reverting to her pet theme.

"How I envy you, Valerie," sighed Marigold at the end of one of Miss Transome's eulogistic recitals of what she did in Germany. "How I would love to go there."

"What is the idea, youngster, are you tired of home and us?" asked Major Coolter.

"No, of course not. But I would love to go to Germany, and I am not a youngster any more."

"You are a terrible age," he scoffed back.

"Nearly as old as Mother was when she married my father," retorted Marigold.

"I would let her go if I were in your place, Mary," advised Mrs. Transome. "I am sure you would never regret it; she would come back changed out of all recognition."

"I do not want her changed, I am quite satisfied with her as she is," smiled Lady Mary.

"You would not want to go if it hurt your Mother, would you now, Marigold?" asked Kendall.

"Oh, no, but could you not come too, Mother?"

"Not very well, darling, you see there is Freddie."

"Of course, how selfish of me. But honestly, Mother, I believe he would miss Father Frederick more than he would miss you. He is the funniest little mite; do you

know, Kendall, Freddie makes me feel quite a child."

"No, *how* ridiculous."

"You may jeer," she replied gravely, "but it is too absurd the way that baby affects me. The only thing that is young about him is his figure; in every other way he is about a hundred years old: he is awfully clever, and thinks of the cunningest little things."

"That, with all due respect to you, Mary, is clearly inherited from his father; that man is all brain, charm and brain." Mrs. Transome spoke triumphantly, as though in some way she had been responsible for the intelligence with which she was crediting the Schultz father and son. "I know Jerry thinks the world of him. He would not dream of making any investment unless Sir Frederick approved. A wonderful man, my dear, a wonderful man, and here he is, just as I was speaking of him. How truly delightful."

The unusual appearance of Sir Frederick in her apartments at this, or in fact any hour, amazed his wife. With his coming she felt an instant relief, for it was his opportune arrival, and that alone, which prevented her either tearfully pleading with, or peremptorily ordering Griselda to cease talking about Germany and the Germans. Her feeling quickly changed to the one of caution she always experienced when in her husband's presence, an inexplicable certitude that she must be on her guard, a conviction that she must work against him—for what or how she could not explain, even to herself. She could not stifle any more than she could analyse her feelings.

In the greetings that followed their host's entry, Kendall stood up to take his departure. Lady Mary, divining his intention, sent him a pleading look, which he rightly interpreted as a desire on her part that he should remain, and he wandered across the room and sank into a chair near Valerie, Rooper and Marigold.

"Come and sit here," cooed Mrs. Transome, patting the seat vacated by Kendall, "and tell me what great

schemes you have been busying yourself with to-day."

"You would find my doings dull listening; I would prefer to hear you talking," replied Schultz taking a seat beside her.

He made no attempt at explanation to his wife for this most unusual intrusion. To an unobserving on-looker, it was a most natural situation, this strolling in for a few minutes before dinner; but, as has been observed, Schultz did nothing without an object. In this case one of his reasons was to ascertain for himself how the land lay between Kendall and Lady Mary; he had never given the matter serious thought until little Freddie's words set him thinking.

That Kendall's visits to the house took place almost every day was nothing; he had no objections to offer, any more than he would demur if this or any other man became her lover—that is so long as she conducted her affairs decorously. But there must be no scandal. She, as the mother of his boy, must be outwardly circumspect in all that she did.

He saw and understood Kendall's movement to depart; the silent look that caused his change of plan was also noted by Schultz; he would take this affair in hand. For the moment he devoted his attention to the fulfilment of his second reason for honouring this unimportant little gathering with his presence.

Lady Mary had spoken truly when she asserted her belief that Schultz wanted Marigold to go to Germany. He did, and he meant that she should go, but it must be arranged without his apparent intervention. That was always his way—an excellent one for gaining an objective, as he had discovered early in his career.

It was simplicity itself to start the loquacious Griselda and her daughter off on their favourite subject, Germany.

"Do you remember anything about Germany, Father Frederick?" questioned Marigold.

"Very little, I was a mere child when I left there. I

know I lived in a village by a river, where we children wore wooden shoes that clattered loudly on the cobbles, and ate our food out of bright blue basins. My father used to play the violin at night, and someone—it may have been my mother—told us wonderful fairy stories, but that is the usual German life."

"Oh, Father Frederick, oh," Marigold's great eyes seemed all black pupil in her excitement, "how I long to go and see for myself."

"No, no, Marigold, we could not spare you," laughed Schultz gently, but though he was looking at his step-daughter, his all-seeing eyes had witnessed another wordless message that passed between his wife and Kendall.

Kendall's was one of "There, what did I tell you, it is all right." Lady Mary's had been: "So you think, I know better."

So! Then he, Schultz, must be very careful; these simple folk were very easily managed, and each time Marigold voiced her wish he definitely objected to the granting of it. "Not," as he added, "that it rests with me; you know, Marigold, it is your mother who decides such matters. For my part I would prefer your remaining in England to finish your education." This quite calmly, although years ago he had completed all arrangements as to where she was to stay in Germany and with whom. Little Lady Mary would one day be big Lady Mary and a useful piece on his board.

"You are such a splendid listener," gushed Mrs. Transome as she rose to go, "you make even silly little me feel as though I was worth while, if you know what I mean. I am sure that is one of the reasons Mary's At Homes are such a success; everyone truly says that nobody is anybody unless you meet them here, and nobody must be somebody if one meets them in your house."

## CHAPTER VI

ARE you busy?" Sir Frederick rose courteously on his wife's entry into his library.

"Not too occupied to feel deeply honoured at this too rare occurrence," he smiled.

"I do not like to intrude here any more than I would in your city office. You are always so—busy," she finished weakly. Had Lady Mary been perfectly candid she would have admitted that her main reason for so rarely entering her husband's apartments was because the atmosphere stifled her every sense, save the one that warned her to be careful, to be always on her guard against what, she could not define. With increasing nervousness she sank into the chair that he pushed forward.

"I have come to consult—to speak to you about—" she hesitated.

"Whatever the cause I am grateful to it," he lied smoothly, resuming his seat. He had always tacitly discouraged any intrusion into his domain.

"It is about Marigold," she spoke abruptly; "she will not abandon this obsession of going to Germany."

"But surely if you do not wish her to go?"

"Oh, of course if I insisted she would obey, but she would be unhappy. When once she has set her mind on a thing she is most tenacious."

"And you want me to dissuade her?"

"No."

"Then——?"

"Why do you want her to go?"

"I have no desire on the subject one way or the other. Subservient as always to your wishes, I have attempted on the few occasions when Marigold in my presence has

spoken of her longing to go to Germany, to dissuade her."

"I have heard you." There was a hopelessness, a bitterness in her voice.

"Perhaps if you discouraged your chatty little friend Mrs. Transome and her daughter, for they, if anyone, are to blame, with their eternal talk of the advantages to be derived from education abroad, we might succeed in eradicating all thought of Germany from Marigold's mind."

During the pause that followed Lady Mary longed ardently for a supernatural power that would help her penetrate this man's brain, help her to solve the mystery of this stranger's aims. Yes, this stranger. Despite the fact that he was the father of her boy, he was as alien to her as her own little son, the working of whose mind she was quite unable to follow. Intuition, combined with the knowledge of her husband's methods, had warned her that he wished Marigold to go to Germany.

"I suppose I shall have to gratify Marigold's wish." As the words dropped from her lips, her eyes were keenly on the alert.

She watched his face in vain; it remained expressionless.

"That is very self-sacrificing of you," he said, as he leaned forward and with great care knocked the grey ash from the end of his cigar into the metal tray that stood on the desk at his elbow.

"I shall make all necessary arrangements." Her tone was sharp.

"I hope you will not hesitate to let me know if I can be of any assistance in the matter, for although I am only Marigold's stepfather, I take as great an interest in her as though she were in reality my own child."

Ten minutes later Lady Mary sat alone in her own room, realising with a sense of bewilderment that she had agreed to let Sir Frederick attend to the details of

Marigold's journey, and arrange where her daughter should stay in Germany.

When his wife left the room Sir Frederick leant back in his chair and smiled. To-morrow he would send word to the family in Berlin with whom he had settled some years ago that Marigold should stay, and repeat his instructions to them as to what his step-daughter was to do, see and learn; nothing harsh or ugly, cruel or coarse was to come within her ken, only beautiful things were to be shown her, only the gentle side of German life, no hate or jealousy of any other countries or peoples. Marigold must receive impressions that would cause her to love and protect the Fatherland when she returned to England.

Another of his little schemes matured. Sir Frederick was pleased, and he greeted Gustav Lemberg with an unwonted affability which caused his German cousin to blink his little green eyes in rapid reflection as he wondered what unpleasant work was now to be demanded of him. Not asking for or expecting any explanation when he was ordered to leave in two days' time for a walking tour in Wales, accepting without comment all instructions, including several telegrams signed by the banker, memorising the dates and times at which they were to be dispatched, and the particular village where he was to wait in a week's time for further orders.

Twenty-two hours later, that invaluable Secretary, Mr. Trent, was distressed to perceive that his master was not paying his usual interest to certain business matters. Instead of doing so, marvel of marvels, his chin actually rested on his chest and his eyes were closed.

To Mr. Trent's repeated question of "What shall I reply to this request for an overdraft?" the banker made no answer. "Not feeling quite up to the mark are you, sir?" he asked anxiously.

Sir Frederick sighed.

"What is that, Trent? No, as a matter of fact, I am not."

## YELLOW SOULS

"Been sticking too close to work perhaps," dared the Secretary.

"Oh, nonsense, but perhaps you are right, fresh air is what I need."

"Could you not take a holiday, sir, you need one."

"Impossible, Trent."

"But your health; I am sure I would do my best to keep things straight during your absence."

"I am convinced of that, Trent. Well, perhaps a week among the hills in Wales, ah, that would give me fresh life and vigour."

Thus it came about *Mr. Otto Schultz* was able to arrive quietly in Berlin a few days later, though at the same time his wife and Trent received telegrams with his name attached from different villages in Wales.

For an unimportant commoner such as this *Mr. Otto Schultz* professed for the time being to represent, he was received in Berlin with marked deference by persons in high official positions both civil and military. He had much interesting information to convey, many suggestions both to give and to receive.

It would have sorely puzzled the simple Trent could he have heard Sir Frederick arranging to have agitators sent to stir up strikes and trouble in order to prevent a certain railway in the near East from being completed. He would have sworn that either he or his employer had taken leave of their senses, for, as he would have pointed out, Sir Frederick had invested an incredibly large sum of money in this railway; permission to build it had been given the English Company (of which the Banker was Chairman) on certain conditions, one being that the work must be completed within a certain time.

Later when the smash came and the English Company were compelled to forfeit their money and right to build the railway, it was taken over by a German Company, when in some miraculous way the strike ceased and all went merrily forward. The Secretary was enthusiastic

in his praise of the philosophy with which Sir Frederick bore his losses.

During this visit to Berlin Otto Schultz arranged for the opening in England of "The German Continental Bank," and although much of his money was gained entirely from English people, with which the new bank was to be financed, no such name as Schultz appeared in either the list of directors or among the supporters of the venture.

He had so much to do during his brief visit to the land of his birth, that he must be excused for not finding time to visit his old parents: in fact they never learnt of this or any other visit of his to the Fatherland.

A hundred and one things occupied his time.

For some reason best known to themselves the military authorities thought quite highly of his suggestion that a German firm should make a most generous offer to erect signposts all through Belgium, bearing on the back of the boards exceedingly elucidating maps which would prove of invaluable assistance to men, or for the matter of that, bodies of men, who might find themselves on these roads and at a loss to know the best route and quickest ways of gaining their destination. These maps were not visible to the naked eye of a casual observer, a thin covering hid them; this precaution may have been to protect them from the ravages of the weather, or it may have been to keep them for the exclusive use of Germans.

The military authorities, with the honoured help of Royalty, took a kindly and penetrating interest in advising Otto Schultz as to the most advantageous sites on the East coast and elsewhere in England whereon to erect residences, factories or other buildings.

It was most comforting for a man who had taken out papers of naturalisation in a foreign country to find the citizens of his birth-place so eager to assist him, so sympathetically concerned in all he had to tell them, so anxious to help him carry on his life's work.

## YELLOW SOULS

It might even make one wonder why Otto Schultz felt no longing to abandon the country of his adoption for beloved Germany.

It might!

## CHAPTER VII

MARIGOLD had been absent from home over a year now. Her letters contained glowing accounts of all she was learning, and were full of eulogies of the people amongst whom she was living. They were wonderful, so she declared, so clever, so thorough, so admirable in most respects; there were some things she could wish changed, their manners for instance left much to be desired.

"—In fact, Mother darling," she wrote, "the Germans have no manners, they do and say the most appalling things, really you would be shocked. I am myself sometimes, and then honestly I have to laugh. The things they do with their food at table, the unconcern with which they do things to their teeth right before you at meal-times, well—it baffles description. Herr Professor Graffen dined here yesterday; he is awfully clever and talked most learnedly about microbes and things, but I am sorry to say he did not think much of the English people, in fact really and truly he seemed to hate us, until Mrs. Löwenkopf said something in German which I could not understand. I think she was telling him about me, so that he would not say horrid things about the English, because he looked hard at me and said, 'Ach, is that so?' and did not say another word about us. Mrs. Löwenkopf is awfully thoughtful like that."

In another letter she wrote in much the same strain about the marvellous Germans, and of her continued progress in her studies, then: "Of course as I am not 'out' yet, I cannot go to dances and things, but I do go to the most divine concerts, and sometimes to the the-

atres; they stage their things so much better than we do, but Mammie, the people, the actors and actresses, are the most awful looking frumps I ever saw, they dress so badly, but all German women do dress appallingly. The audiences amaze me; would you believe it, the men think nothing of—(please don't be shocked, Mamie)—they actually spit, not the common peasantry people, but the well-born rich ones. No one takes any notice, so I suppose it's because I'm so insular (that is what they all say about us English here, that we are 'insular') that I am horrified at lots of the things they do; for instance, they really truly buy their husbands, honestly I am not exaggerating. Freda Löwenkopf—I have told you about her, she is just twenty years of age, little and fat, with a funny round nose, and very blue eyes, and rather nice fair hair, but big feet and hands, and does not know how to dress for toffee—she often talks to me about getting married. Some of the things would make you blush; I am getting used to it, and she just says them quite calmly as though she was reciting 'Little Jim.' She says she intends marrying a high-born Army officer, that she is rich enough, or her father is, for her to do so; he must be tall and fair with a moustache, then she is going to live in a garrison town and have a good time. Oh, Mammie mine, if you could only hear what she thinks would be a good time, your hair would turn grey. I sometimes think mine will when she is talking.

"I asked her if she was not going to wait until she fell in love before she married. She laughed and said 'No,' she would do all her falling in love after she was married, her husband would not mean anything, but she wanted to be 'Frau' instead of 'Fräulein'; and if she was the wife of a high-up officer all the little officers would have to make love to her, so she could make her husband get them promotion and things. Isn't it too awful?

"Honestly when I listen to Freda talking I cannot wonder at the contemptuous way German men treat their woman; do not misunderstand, Mammie, I love being

here and my music is a million times better, you will be surprised when you hear me play, but I must say I would not like to be a German, and I would simply hate to marry one; of course, darling, I know that Father Frederick is a sort of German, but scarcely at all—England caught him young.

"I said that about hating to marry a German because I have had my first proposal! There! I must tell you all about it, although Mrs. Löwenkopf was awfully cross and said she did not know what on earth my father would say, then she got very confused and said, 'I mean your parents.' She did not exactly ask me not to tell you, she only said it was not worth while troubling you, but I know you would feel far more worried if I did not tell you everything that happens, so I am going to.

"Although I am not 'out' when Mrs. Löwenkopf has At Homes or small parties, I join in the fun. Last week she had a garden-party. I wore my new white muslin that you sent me and my Leghorn hat with pink roses, and looked quite nice. A great crowd arrived, the *pâté de foie gras* sandwiches and the ices were just too scrumptious. I was having a lovely time, we danced on the lawn to a German band, and they played the 'Blue Danube'; it was heavenly. I had danced four waltzes, two polkas, one quadrille, and Lancers, and had eaten nine ices, so when a Lieutenant Wilhelm Gratz asked if I would dance, I said 'No,' I just wanted to sit still. He asked me if he might stay and talk to me; I said 'Yes.'

"He asked me a million questions, why I was called 'Lady Mary,' who was my father, all about you, darling, and Father Frederick, if I had any sisters or brothers, how much money I had, how much I was likely to have, and all sorts of funny things, then he gabbled off a whole rigmarole about himself. I was not taking much notice, when I heard him saying, 'So you understand I too am highly born, and I honourably offer you my hand,' and I suddenly realised I was having my first proposal.

"I felt so disappointed I could have cried. I had always planned it was to be so romantic, on a moonlight night in a gondola in Italy, or in a conservatory at home, and here it was with a fat German Lieutenant who I believe wore corsets (Freda says he does, because she poked him to see and she felt the bones). I was not a bit thrilled, only furious. I just sat and stared at him; he must have seen how surprised I felt, because he went on talking nineteen to the dozen, something about his birth, his great and noble family, his aunt who married a count (I do not see what that had to do with the question, do you?), what a splendid thing it would be for me to have captured a man like him whom lots of women were trying to get for their daughters, and what a good time I could have—he would not interfere, I could do what I liked after I was married—he would never say a word; until I could have screamed. Just when I had made up my mind to take to my heels and hide for the rest of the afternoon, Mrs. Löwenkopf appeared on the scene.

"Somehow she seemed to sense what was happening, she was awfully upset, she spoke very crossly to my proposer, and marched me off and kept me beside her all the rest of the afternoon; I was jolly glad, because we sat near the tea-tables and I had some more ices."

At the end of the letter appeared two postscripts, the first read: "P.S. When I told Freda about it afterwards, she said I ought to have enticed him away somewhere and let him kiss me, to see how I really felt towards him. She says that is what she is going to do. One of her father's clerks proposed to her once; she thought he was going to from the look in his eye, so she invited him up to her old school-room, on pretence that she wanted him to tell her something about book-keeping; she let him propose, and kiss her, then she knew what she suspected, that she did not like him at all. She pretended to be most awfully insulted and told her father,

who dismissed him, which I thought rather a shame, and felt sorry for the clerk, but Freda thought she was very clever—M."

Then followed the second postscript.

"P.P.S. Ask Father Frederick if he knows a Herr Reubenheim—I want most particularly to know, because at the garden-party after my proposal I saw a funny fat man with short red-grey straggly whiskers, and long scraggly hair on his head, eating sandwiches, or he did not exactly eat, he gulped. I was very rude, I stared and stared, he fascinated me so, with his red face that clashed with his hair and great enormous hands like a gorilla's; he would jerk out a paw, snatch up a sandwich and gulp; it vanished; truly and really he didn't masticate them, I watched ever so carefully. Well, after he had finished about fifty sandwiches, he noticed me staring (I could not help it, Mummie, I am so sorry), he came over and began talking to me; Mrs. Löwenkopf seemed to think he was quite safe, so she let him. After she had told him my name, he said: '*Ach, the daughter of Schultz.*' I explained that Father Frederick was my step-parent. He said, 'He is a great man, a goot man.'

"I agreed and asked him if he knew Father Frederick. Before he could say anything Mrs. Löwenkopf sort of looked at him, so he said:

"No, no, that he had heard of him," but I am as certain as certain could be he was not telling the truth. Do ask Father Frederick if he knows him. I heard some people say he was enormously rich, and owned a place for making guns and things, although Mrs. Löwenkopf and her husband say it is a waste of money because the Germans will never go to war with anyone, so I said it was a pity to waste all that money. They replied that they had to do something to give employment to such thousands of men, besides, it was not a bad idea to have plenty of guns, then if any of the other nations began to fight, Germany (who wants peace all over the world) could

say, 'Stop fighting or we will come and blow you all to pieces.' Of course they would not really do that, but it would make the others so afraid, they would just settle up their quarrels peacefully. Aren't the Germans wonderful people? Don't forget Herr Reubenheim."

Such epistles seriously disturbed Lady Mary; she wrote a very forcible letter to Mrs. Löwenkopf, rather ordering than requesting her to be more careful of her daughter while she was in her care, explaining that the only reason she did not come over and bring Marigold back to England was on account of her health, and she would be most grateful if Mrs. Löwenkopf, who had been good enough to come over and escort little Lady Mary to Germany, could find it convenient to chaperon her back again.

To which letter Mrs. Löwenkopf made reply that she quite understood Lady Mary's feelings with regard to that special incident of the proposal; it could not have distressed her more than it had done she herself, and to rest assured that nothing of the sort would ever occur again while Marigold was with her.

It would be such a pity to take her from the masters who were so interested in her, as she showed a marked intelligence, and in music a positive talent.

Lady Mary questioned her husband with regard to Herr Reubenheim; this time he was not quite so successful in controlling his expression, in fact a gleam of positive anger flamed for a moment in his eyes, startling his wife, it was the first time he had displayed such a sign. But it was only momentary.

"Reubenheim," he reflected, "Reubenheim, I meet so many men in the city, no, I do not remember him."

Despite this denial Lady Mary felt convinced that her daughter had divined rightly, that her husband not only knew Herr Reubenheim, but was most annoyed with him for having cause Marigold to suspect the acquaintanceship.

Mother and daughter were quite right, this maker of armaments and the naturalised English banker knew one another intimately, at least as intimately as anyone could know Sir Frederick, he was sufficient unto himself, making no close friends.

He also wrote to Germany, two letters, one that caused the Löwenkopfs to anathematise Marigold's would-be suitor, and to hold serious converse between themselves before answering. The other epistle brought a most penitent reply from Reubenheim.

And so Marigold remained in Germany.



## CHAPTER VIII

HER RUEBENHEIM'S few idle words might have proved disastrous to many of Sir Frederick's carefully planned schemes; he wished to be entirely disassociated from Germany in the minds of all Britishers.

Nothing pleased him better than to have his loyalty to England commented on; a remark of this character never failed to bring forth one of his very rare involuntary smiles.

It was at the close of a meeting of directors of his bank that such a comment was made, most justifiably to all appearances.

The occasion was one where these men had gathered together to decide a very important financial proposition; minor points in connection with the English bank were disposed of, then came the vital one.

It appeared that a German bank was opening in the City of London (the German Continental to wit), and a proposition had been made to the English bank that they should amalgamate. After a high tribute paid to Sir Frederick Schultz's capabilities, he was asked to become Managing Director of the new concern; his co-directors were invited to take seats on the Board.

The name appended to the letters setting forth this offer was that of a German financier well known through the civilised world, it was one to conjure with.

When last in Berlin, Otto Schultz, foreseeing the effect such a document over the great name would produce, had taken great pains over the wording of it; apparently he had forgotten the letter and that the whole project had emanated from his fertile brain, for he seemed as surprised at the receipt of it as his fellow directors.

Silently he scanned the letter, listening to the controversial storm that broke forth. As he had anticipated, the proposition was received with great favour. Then came the moment for which he had waited, when his opinion was asked.

He spoke slowly. It appeared as though the idea was so new that he was forced to pause every now and then, not to search for words, but in order to think out some fresh point of view that occurred to him. The gist of his reply was to the effect that despite the undoubted advantages to be derived from association with such a financial power as this German banker, personally he would prefer to confine his energies and attention to the English bank. His policy (so he said) had always been to make money for their British clients out of Great Britain and her Colonies, and to invest that capital where it was made. He had nothing, no one the world over could have anything derogatory to say about this German corporation; he hoped they would not be prejudiced against it by anything he might state, but he needed no time for consideration before definitely refusing the highly complimentary offer made to himself. He had done his poor best in the past for the English bank with which he was so proud to be associated in such honourable company, and he hoped to continue doing so; frankly he did not care to split his interests.

It would be idle to deny that money was to be made from investing in this German Continental Bank, but, if they would pardon him for again introducing the personal element, he was not anxious to become a multi-millionaire; he would leave foreign investments to more ambitious individuals.

Finally he wound up with the earnest hope that nothing he had said could be construed as prejudicial to the interests of either the English bank or the German Continental one, in fact he paid high compliments to the name that figured at the end of the letter under discussion, and to those others associated with it. They were, he

stated, giants in the world of commerce, but with the concurrence of his colleagues, he would prefer to abide by the attitude he had adopted.

During the discussion that followed his speech, Sir Frederick's face bore the expression a schoolmaster's might have worn, on listening to a well-learned lesson. His decision was applauded, his devotion to their bank appreciated, and, while one and all decided to vote against the proposed amalgamation, still they reserved the right to join the Board of the new company, and, it might be, even invest a little money therein, provided, of course, that Sir Frederick did not consider it would injure the standing of the English Bank.

Sir Frederick did not think so.

Thus it was the German Continental Bank was financed by English capital. As years rolled by, and they found it paid, many men of wealth speculated more and still more in German funds. Later on they awakened to the fact that the whole of their substance was in German hands; still, remembering his words, no one could blame Sir Frederick Schultz for this.

"By God, Schultz, you are more British than the lot of us put together. England needs such men as you," had been the Earl of Saltleagh's tribute, which had caused Sir Frederick's cryptic smile.

The smile lingered as he thought over his human pawns a little later in the day, as he drove to a discreet little residence in Saint John's Wood, to which he was admitted without question. Evidently he was a well-known visitor here, for the man-servant who relieved him of his hat and coat ushered him direct into the presence of the fascinating actress, Mademoiselle Cleo, who divided her time while in England between this dainty house and her other one in Plymouth, where she had a large circle of friends among the Navy men who habited the port—Admiral Sir Babcock Roofe, it was giggled behind fans, and commented on in clubs, being particularly smitten with the charms of Mademoiselle, who was ac-

cepted on her own statement as being a Frenchwoman, explaining her Teutonic accent from the fact that she had been sent to school in Germany.

Sir Frederick found his hostess in a state of seething fury, which she took no pains to conceal.

"Ah, it is you, *mon ami*. I wish to see you. I am what you call insolted, yairs?" This long drawn-out last word was a favourite of the dark vivacious little foreigner.

"Not by me, I hope," he smiled.

"*Non, non*, it is that Fédora; bah, I 'ate 'er. She is no good, she is bad, she is only a *danseuse*, not an actress like me, Cleo."

"And a very clever actress too," flattered Schultz.

"That is true," she acknowledged complacently, "and yet it is true, me I 'ave seen my name in some silly newspapers to the side of that daughter of a wash-woman, that Fédora. 'The beautiful rivals, Cleo and Fédora,' one imbecile paper write. 'Er! *ma foi*, she is old I tell you, old to me."

"Oh, come, Cleo, she is not much over twenty."

"Twenty! la, la, that one has thirty years, and me I do not arrive at nineteen yet," she announced triumphantly. "I will marry myself, yairs, that will give me much avertisment, all the world will wonder that me, I would marry. It shall be a great match I make, some English Prince, I would like, ah ha, that will make Fédora to grit 'er teeths."

For a while she dilated on this scheme, which she eventually abandoned.

"... but no, it would make me too un'appy. I like it not for me. I 'ave the artistic temperament. Then I shall cut 'er throat. I will spring at 'er, and so" (making a show of ripping her own delightfully formed neck across), "then I shall look at 'er there, dead at my two foots. But she will look 'orrible, I tell you, 'orrible, and I shall say to 'er . . ."

"No good saying anything to a corpse; she would not

hear you," interrupted Schultz, more bored than amused.

"You are right, my friend, she must live and suffer, as she make me suffer! I will put some vitriol on 'er face, yairs, that will make 'er not to insult me some more."

"What has Fédora been up to?"

"My God, is it you 'ave not 'eard? Listen, I will tell you what this" (her string of adjectives was illuminating but unrepeatable) "this creature of the gutter do. You know I go after the theatre every night to Jimmy's restaurant in Peecadeely, so she come too, to make me some annoyance."

"Why do you not go somewhere else?" was her listener's natural question.

"An' leave that Fédora to laugh, to say she 'as drive me away! *Jamais de la vie, mon Dieu.* I would eat my 'at before I do that. Two nights 'ave passed since I went like always to Jimmy's. I appear *ravissante*: my toilet was of a *chic* incredible. I enter and no one call out that I am wonderful, no one take some notice at all. I was chagrined, I tell you. My God, I was annoyed. I go to a table and when I sit down I look to find why no one shout out that 'ere is *la belle Cleo*. Et voilà that *cochon* Fédora, she 'ad no clo'es on 'er. It might be if one look underneath the table she 'ave a skirt, all to be seen was 'er jewels, diamonds, and pearls and rubies and emeralds; she 'ad covered 'erself in jewels. It was not 'er, but 'er jewels everyone regard.

"Ah ha, I think, I 'ave more better jewels than you" (unprintable) "woman, so I come 'ome and last night I put me on all, all, I wear the diamond collarette and tiara what you give me, yairs! the pearls the Rajah of Sard bring me and 'is emeralds, the rubies of so big a size that the Prince of Pamada smuggle from the Palace for me, all of them. My fingers stick out stiff with my rings: on my two thumbs big jewels. Now, I say to myself, we shall see what we shall see. My 'eart 'e beat. I enter so" (she sprang to her feet and acted as she spoke), "and I wait

like this, for all in Jimmy's to cry out, I am adorable, that I am a queen."

"You must have looked magnificent," Schultz commented.

"*Magnifique*, you are right. I look like the mistress of a thousand kings, like the Queen of Sheba, and . . . they laugh. Oh, they laugh and laugh. I look round to see why they laugh, and there I see that . . . dancing thing dressed all in a thin white robe of a great simplicity, with one big white rose in 'er black 'air, and one white rose on 'er black 'eart, and with 'er she 'ad bring 'er maid, 'oo sit beside 'er, with all Fédora's jewels she wear the night before on 'er, on the maid, I tell you.

"Everyone knew Fédora arranged this tableau for a trap for me, she 'ad guess I would come to show all the peoples my jewels is better than 'ers. I 'ave fell in the trap and all those brutes they laugh, oh, 'ow they laugh. I will 'ave my revenge on 'er, on that . . . Fédora. I 'ate 'er, I 'ate 'er, I 'ate 'er," her voice rose crescendo fashion, as she reiterated her feelings towards Mademoiselle Fédora.

Further emphasising her remarks by hurling choice morsels of china to the floor, where they shivered to atoms, then the emotional Cleo collapsed sobbing wildly on the cushioned sofa.

"And now I will tell you why I sent for you to-day," she promised after her paroxysm had worn itself out.

"Not to kill Fédora, I hope?"

"Worse, I wish that you 'elp me shrivel 'er up, to make 'er 'eart sink in 'er stomach like some lead weights, so that she wish to fall down and die."

"What is your idea?" The self-contained man felt uneasy.

"Is it true what I 'ear that Fédora is to dance at your 'ouse to-morrow night?"

"Yes."

"Ah." It was like the sound of a wild beast.

"But not as a guest. She has been engaged to dance for my friend's entertainment, that is all."

"And me, I shall be one of the guests." Cleo, soft and smiling, quite a different creature from the fiery virago of a moment since, sat up and beamed into the eyes of her visitor.

"Good God, no!" Sir Frederick was genuinely shocked at the suggestion.

Her smile vanished. Cleo frowned.

"I will come and so humiliate 'er. I do not make a scene, Frederick. I do not speak with someone. Just I range myself where Fédora see me when she enter to dance. I watch her perform; she is paid to amuse me, and it might even be I applaud, so," she laughed, languidly clapping her hands together.

"My dear girl, you are mad to think of such a thing. It cannot be done."

"Ah, *mon ami*, do not be cruel!" Cleo's lower lip trembled, her voice was very soft. She took Sir Frederick's hand between her own and held it clasped to her breast. "You will do this so tiny a thing for me: 'ave you no pity, no sympathy for what I suffer last night?"

"Of course, I am sorry. You shall go to Tiffany's to-morrow and choose the finest jewel they can show you."

"That is nice of you, but it is not what I ask. Come, tell me you will arrange it as I desire, and I will be, oh, so very kind to you."

"No." The monosyllable expressed in the tone Sir Frederick employed left no doubt in Cleo's mind that he meant it in its fullest sense. "As to your . . . kindness, I can always buy that, my dear."

"Take care." She dropped his hand and an evil expression disfigured her face.

There was a moment's silence. Cleo thought rapidly, then . . .

"Come, we must not quarrel." The actress had herself well in hand. "Look, we strike a bargain, yairs?"

"What is that?"

"You make it possible for me to do this so small a thing and me I tell you what you want so much to know."

"What is that?" repeated Sir Frederick.

"You want to know what 'appened at the last manœuvres of the British Fleet, and why Admiral Raynive was recalled, yairs?"

"Do you know?"

His tone was nonchalant in the extreme.

Cleo nodded, her shrewd eyes watching him intently.

"Well?"

"It is to be a bargain, yairs?"

"Tell me and I will see what I can do."

"No, my friend, I tell you the day after to-morrow, after the great ball at your 'ouse."

"Can you not trust me, Cleo?"

"No." There was no malice in the word, it was merely an answer to his question.

Sir Frederick was not offended, on the contrary, he laughed.

"If we are not to trust one another, what is to be done?" he inquired.

"You know you can trust me, just like we both togezzer know I would be one damn fool to trust you." She knew her man and was not mincing matters.

"What makes you think I am interested in the information you have?"

"I am not some blind stupid bats," she scoffed. "You come 'ere and make your sort of . . . love to me, and you ask your many questions, and I, sometimes I answer them."

"Mere idle curiosity, my dear Cleo."

She laughed.

"You do not believe me?"

"*Ma foi*, no!"

"Then what is your idea?"

"I 'ave my own thoughts, Frederick *Schultz*." The

accent on his name brought a light of interest into his eyes.

So this little *cocotte* suspected his real motives! He felt a tinge of respect for her astuteness.

"But what does it matter," she continued, "I 'ave been willing to tell you some things. I 'ave notice that you pay me your visits always after I 'ave been to my little 'ouse at Plymouth, or whenever Admiral Roofe 'e is in London, then can you be surprise at me I put two and two togezzer and make 'im up to four?"

"You do not understand business, Cleo; many things you tell me may help in the City."

"So! This City?" Cleo blew a cloud of smoke from the cigarette she had lighted, her eyes following it to the ceiling.

"Certainly. What other city should I be interested in?" Sir Frederick's eyes had narrowed to mere slits. There was no doubt but that she had succeeded in interesting him.

"Oh," with a shrug of her shoulders, "there are very many other big cities, Paris par example, and also there is . . . Madrid, Lisbon, Vienna . . . (here followed a significant pause) "there is . . . Berlin, the capital of Germany, eh!"

"My interests are entirely centred in England. These other places affect me very little."

"Pah, me, I am weary of this talk; we speak of 'ow I go to your ball to-morrow night, is it not so?"

"I have told you that is quite impossible."

"Then I shall not tell you what you wish to know."

"You amuse me. I know all that I desire to."

"You think you do, but you only know what many others 'ave been told, not the *vrai* truth. It is of much interest, *je vous assure*."

"My dear girl, if I really wished to hear more on any subject I could easily learn."

"Try and see. Ask from others what really 'appened in the Bay of Cavite when the Americans sail out quick

and fire some shots across the bows of the German cruiser." She paused for a moment, then laughed wickedly, as she noticed his evident interest. "And 'ere is some more for you to try to learn: ask what part the English play in this affair, my clevaire friend, then tell me what you learn, and I will laugh at you for believing the lies that will be told you, yairs."

Sir Frederick did some rapid thinking.

"Look here, Cleo, be a sensible girl. I would do anything you ask me within reason, but this is quite impossible."

"The one thing a woman want is just the one thing a man say is impossible. 'E will promise 'er the moon, but if she asks for a red 'erring, 'e will sigh, '*Hélas*, it is the one thing I cannot give you.'"

"Sir Babcock and Lady Roofe are to be present. How can you appear?"

"I will not let them see me. I will only stay for a few little minute, just while Fédora dance, and then *voilà*, me I slip so quiet away like a little mouse," she coaxed.

"How can I permit a woman like you to come as my wife's guest?"

"She will not know. She cannot know all the peoples by sight what come to 'er 'ouse." She was accustomed to his brutality, it did not affect her in the least. To have her request granted, that was all, nothing else mattered.

"I would know. I could not dream of subjecting my wife to such an insult as your presence would be to her."

"Pah, you care no more for Lady Mary's feelings than you do for mine. You use that or any excuse just like you would use 'er or me, or your child, in any way that suit you. You 'ave no 'eart, and I, me, Cleo, know it like I know you. You say you pay me, that is true, you pay me for some things, *et alors, coûte que coûte*, I sell, but I 'ave my own price, and I 'ave much stored up 'ere," tapping her head, "which shall not nevaire be told you,

only for the one condition, *voyez-vous*, and no other, you understand, yairs."

"You little savage." Sir Frederick's voice was very caressing as he rose from his seat, and crossing, sank on the sofa beside Cleo. He knew she was telling the truth, and he wanted to learn what she could tell him, but he was not willing to pay her price. Still, though very young, she was too clever to make an enemy of. Therefore he temporised. "Your opinion of me is quite incorrect, but you amuse me. I like a brainy woman."

"Now you make me compliments. I 'ave a clevaire 'ead me, I know that," she snapped, shaking her head free of his hand that was caressing her hair. "I do not want some flattery, *merci*. Give me what I ask, *chéri*," her voice resuming its purring, wheedling note.

"This affair to-morrow night is nothing, and will be intensely dull. Now how will it do if I invite you to attend a *bal masqué* I am giving next week?"

"It will be not nothing *du tout*, for I will not go to your *bal masqué*, an affair you give every now and then to entertain some riff-raffs what you find it convenient, but difficult to 'ave for your associates, on the night of which Lady Mary cannot attend, because she much regret at the last hour to find 'erself suffering from a bad 'eadache, *non merci, pas pour* Cleo."

And so by turn she raged, coaxed, and threatened, but Sir Frederick remained adamant.

"I have said no, and I mean it," he told her firmly.

"But why?"

"Because you are what you are, and not fit to associate with my friends."

The cold harsh words, full of contempt, dropped like stinging icicles. The actress drew one sharp breath, but instead of the hysterical outburst the man expected, Cleo remained unnaturally silent for a brief moment, then rising with true dignity, inclined her head in a parting salutation to her guest and left the room.

After waiting for a few minutes to see if she would



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return, Sir Frederick shrugged his shoulders and took his departure.

For hours Cleo sat silently thinking, thinking, her eyes half closed, her mouth one long thin line.

## CHAPTER IX

THE following night was a triumph of triumphs for Sir Frederick Schultz. Among his guests he numbered a reigning King from a near-by foreign state, and the popular English Prince, who, with his Princess, was in a most gracious mood, personally congratulating his host on his gift of entertaining.

"It is pleasant to visit a house that is *en règle* without being pompous or pious," he remarked smilingly.

Looking round his well-filled rooms, and noting the cream of English society, together with that of any foreign nobilities who were in London at the moment, Sir Frederick had every reason to be satisfied.

He was proud of himself, as host to such a gathering, proud of the taste displayed, the lights, the music, the flowers, the furniture, the regal figure of his wife clad in black velvet and pearls, who stood at the top of the wide staircase to receive his guests, proud of her because she was well-born, elegantly gowned and "good form." A sneer curled his lip at the impertinence of the little courtesan who dared aspire to mingle even for a moment with these great ones. Still she could elucidate many points for him if she would; those manœuvres, for instance, and the affair between the Americans and the Germans off the United States' newly acquired island in which the English had apparently interfered; also she had rather more than hinted that those three German war vessels which went down off Samoa were not lost through a storm as had been reported. Yes, the shrewd little baggage possessed the power of wheedling many strange secrets from her patrons. She might prove useful in the future, too, by letting him know who needed monetary assistance, and if any needy one was likely to

prove useful, the suave banker could prove most generous; thus his cheque-book and tact placed many powerful men under obligations to him.

It was from Cleo he had learned of Shipley's straitened circumstances, the banker had already marked the rising politician as a coming power, so Shipley and his spendthrift, soulless wife were rescued from bankruptcy and looked on Sir Frederick as their saviour. When Shipley was given a seat on the board of the English Bank he was overwhelmingly grateful; he was one of those who, investing in the German Continental Bank, gradually found all his income was being derived from German sources.

Then Blackett, of the Foreign Office, who would think to look at him to-night there dancing with the fascinating Mrs. Lullford (whose house some ribald wit had dubbed "The Prince's Arms" on account of a certain close friendship she had formed), that a few months ago he had been on the verge of ruin; his thankfulness at the timely help accorded him had been expressed in letters which some day, the banker reflected, might prove very useful.

Lord John Lucas, the Duke of Parkpent, Sir Rowney Tighe, Sir Frederick had been adviser to all these and some scores of others, many of whom were present, enjoying his hospitality to-night.

In devious ways Sir Frederick made it his business to learn of these people's troubled state. In the majority of cases it was money they needed, others were involved in entanglements that seemed likely to cause scandals. In the banker they found tact, sympathy, advice and a liberal cheque-book at their command.

His careless puppets thought they had repaid him with their declared gratitude, until with velvet smooth tongue he would guide their influence in some certain direction antipathetic to their convictions; any uneasiness they might have experienced was quickly smothered by the golden cause he gave them for a renewed feeling of gladness in having such a generous friend to rely on.

These people were not to be blamed for taking advantage of readily proffered assistance. It would have needed greater subtlety than their feather-brains were capable of to divine the reason which moved their benefactor to come to their aid. The fact that not one of them felt a scintilla of affection for this man did not disturb him in the least; he, in turn, experienced none for any living soul, not even for his small son, who was also a pawn on the board, to be moved at his father's discretion.

Sir Frederick was utterly devoid of all kindness or emotion that combine to make normal humanity; he was no sentimentalist, preferring to base his hopes on reason, for he knew that by so doing if disappointment came his way he would only suffer from a sense of injustice, and not from despair,—that could only come were he foolish enough to build on imagination.

He invariably inspired respect, perhaps fear, and even dislike, but, as the brilliant poet-author-playwright, the most sought after man of letters at the time, tersely expressed it: "To hate a perfect man is more futile than drawing a sword against an hallucination."

Schultz was under discussion at the time and to the eager question: "But is he such a perfect man? who are his intimates, his real companions? one judges a man by his friends, we are told," the same genius had cryptically replied, "My dear lady, one generally judges a man by the company his wife does not keep."

Now for an instant the brilliant ballroom was charged with electricity, the languorous Viennese waltz had softly died, over the hum and movement there fell a sudden pause, as the two most talked of women in England suddenly met in the very centre of the apartment. Mrs. Lullford, tall, dark and stately, in cloth of gold and priceless rubies, queen of the Royal Prince's heart, on whose arm she leant, and her rival for that regal position, the sparkling golden-haired beauty, Lady Susan Torchester, the simplicity of whose white satin robe was relieved by the wicked winking of great green emeralds which

adorned her hair and neck and ears, Lady Susan with whom painters pleaded on their knees for permission to portray her beautiful image on canvas, whose every appearance in public created something like a furore, whose *bons mots* were repeated from one end of England to the other.

The world as represented by the gathering in this Berkeley Square ballroom held its breath as it gloated over the meeting.

They met, and convention, that blackmail demanded by scandal, caused their eyes and lips to smile, while they paused to let the observant throng gaze its fill.

"Such a success, don't you think?" purred the victorious Mrs. Lullford. "To-night I am happy, I am feeling life to its full."

"Ah, life," laughed Lady Susan, "that is something we see when we are young and feel when we are old, is it not?" and with a graceful inclination of their heads they passed on.

Immediately the hum of talk broke out, and the Prince, still chuckling over the golden-haired lady's remark, seated himself beside his Royal Consort, on a crimson and gilt chair conveniently placed on a raised dais at the far end of the room, in order to view the event of the evening, Féadora, the rage of the season, who was due to dance.

Plush-clad footmen entered with a crimson rope, which they held to rail off the centre of the room, where shone the only blaze of light, those that had their place on the walls being artistically dimmed.

The especial orchestra engaged for the purpose gave the signal for the dancer's appearance with a few effective chords. She floated in on winged feet and her curtsey towards Royalty was the incarnation of grace. Rising, Féadora stood poised, waiting for a turn in the slowly swelling music before beginning her dance. It came and she glided forward in perfect rhythm with the tune; as it became barbaric and wild, so did her danc-

ing, the whole room was with her, she completely carried her audience away, her triumph was deserved, for she was a past mistress in the terpsichorean art.

"A truly wonderful performance," granted Lady Roofe. The words were uttered ostensibly to her husband, who stood one side of her, and her hostess who was wedged in at the foot of the dais on her left, but in reality the gracious commendation was intended for the greedily listening ears of her friends, who knew of Sir Babcock's infatuation for these dancing girls and actresses; and also knew that Lady Roofe was perfectly cognisant of her husband's deflections from his holy but boring marriage vows.

A hail of hand-clapping applauded Fédora as in a wild whirl her dance ended and she disappeared through doors held open for her by waiting funkeys. Magically the dimmed light sparkled up, and as the plaudits gained in power, Fédora, flushed and smiling, entered in order to bow her thanks, but her smile vanished, her flush died, she stood rooted to the spot, staring, staring.

Another sensation, another tit-bit for the gossips, society was feeling really grateful to Sir Frederick; this night was over-full of food for them. Following the dancer's petrified gaze everyone beheld the notorious Cleo, her black eyes blazing with excitement, her piquant, glowing face alive with devilry, gloved hands languidly applauding her rival, wicked little Cleo, the actress.

Swiftly Cleo swept through the room, curtseyed to Royalty, then with impudent daring stood close before her unwilling hostess, smiling mischievously right into Lady Mary's horrified face.

"Quite charming, thanks so much, good-night," was all she said, too wise to risk the snub an outstretched hand might entail, she bowed and rapidly left the room.

The whole incident had been compressed into the space of a few trenchant moments, yet though brief, they were long enough to note the fact that Cleo, the abandoned one, wore practically a replica of Lady Mary Schultz's black

velvet ball gown, and it must have been more than a coincidence that both their jewels were pearls.

It was more than chance, as her ladyship's maid, listening to the incident with its consequent exaggerations, being retailed in the servants' hall, well knew, and she trembled in case her complicity in the affair, the yielding to the handsome bribe which she had been persuaded to take earlier in the day by Cleo's maid for so harmless seeming a piece of information as a description of what her lady was to wear that night, would come to the ears of either her master or mistress.

Later when Sir Frederick received Tiffany's account, he noticed one costly item was for a pearl necklace supplied to Mlle. Cleo purchased the very day of the night she had by masterful bluff become a self-invited guest at the most gossiped about ball of the season, and enjoyed to the full her double revenge both on Fédora the dancer, and the man who had refused so brutally to help her to that vengeance.

"Scandal, scandal," murmured the poet author, "pah, it offends one, it is imagination eating with its fingers."

"Poor Lady Mary, I am so sorry for her, aren't you?" he was asked.

"No, it is such impertinence to be sorry for anyone, pity is akin to arrogance," he sighed.

Contrary to earlier expectations, Royalty did not remain for supper.



## CHAPTER X

**I**N her letters home, Marigold pleaded so earnestly to be allowed to stay in Germany and go to Kassel to hear the male choristers who were competing for a prize offered by the Emperor, that her mother reluctantly agreed to her request; she wanted her daughter with her. The premonition of which she had spoken to Major Coolter nearly two years ago, that she would never live to see her daughter if the latter went to Germany, proved groundless, for Marigold returned to England early in July, 1900, and Lady Mary met her tall, attractive daughter with open arms.

This was *her* child, secretly she thought of Marigold as her only child, for try as she would, she could never conquer the feeling of almost repugnance for her son. It was one which caused her great mental suffering, for she was an orthodox Christian and bitterly reproached herself for the unnatural lack of motherly love towards the child of her second marriage; her tears were many and bitter, and she spent long hours on her knees praying for a change of heart. The very fact that she could not love him made her doubly gentle and kind in her treatment of the small Frederick, and on this warm July afternoon she took him with her to the railway station to meet his step-sister on her return from Germany.

"Are not you delighted that Marigold is coming home?" she asked the brooding little figure that sat beside her in the carriage.

"Will she bring her luggage with her?" he inquired after few moments' earnest thought.

"My dear child, I suppose so, why do you ask?" Lady Mary was puzzled, she never had been able to follow the workings of his curiously deep mind.

"I suppose she'll bring some in the train with her?"

"Sure to," her attention had wandered, she was brought back to her son with a sharp wrench.

"She wrote and told me she was bringing me presents from Germany," he volunteered.

This, of course, was his reason for wanting to know about his step-sister's luggage; for one moment Lady Mary could have shaken him, then as she looked at the scrap of humanity with its unchildlike expression, a great pity melted her heart; all children were the same, she told herself, how could this little thing be expected to feel any love for a step-sister whom he had not seen for two years, any little boy would have thought more of the prospective presents than the return of, what must be to him, a comparative stranger. So she fought down the feeling of anger, and laughed as she put her arm round the unresponsive form and drew him close to her, vowing silently that she would not let herself become engrossed in her beloved daughter to the neglect of her baby son.

"Do you love me, Freddie?" as she asked the question she took his chin in her hand and turned his face upwards, bending over to look into his eyes. Eyes which, after regarding her cunningly, narrowed in the way she hated; as usual, he was planning, as usual he ignored her question, she could never teach him to answer directly.

"I will be excited to-night, I don't suppose I'll sleep for ever so long."

"Oh yes, you will, but answer me, Freddie, do you love me?"

"If I can't sleep, I had better stay up later to-night," he remarked slyly.

She dropped his face and sat erect. "Any child would say the same thing," she told herself, "they were all funny little scheming things; no, not any child, for Marigold had been the sweetest, frankest infant, but little boys were all alike." Desperately her mind pleaded for the cunning-faced mite seated beside her, as she fought

valiantly against the ever-growing wish that she had never borne such a son.

She must love him, she would love him, she was a wicked, wicked woman; poor little baby thing, whom God had shaped after His own image, she would find the spark of divinity that lives in us all, she would be patient and loving and tender and—and—, oh, if she could but take him away from his father's influence! He was not her child, he was his father's—

Then for a time Freddie was forgotten, for Marigold was in her arms; such a radiant, wonderful, excited Marigold, pulsing with life and the joy of living, her straight young slimness accentuated by the plain dark blue travelling costume she wore, her hair no longer hung in golden plaits, but rolled neatly in a knob on the nape of her neck.

"Oh, Mammie, Mammie darling, how lovely to see you again." Then she folded her half-brother in her arms in a veritable bear's embrace.

"And little Freddiekins, do you remember me, pet?" she inquired.

"Where's your things?" he asked.

"Which things, you solemn-faced midget?" laughingly queried Marigold.

"Get in, dearest girl," interrupted Lady Mary, brushing past the waiting footman who stood holding open the carriage door. "And now," she added, as they drove towards Berkeley Square, "let me look at you," and mother and daughter gazed searchingly at one another.

"It is time I returned, Mother, you need me," pronounced Marigold gravely. "And—"

"You are terribly grown up," her mother laughed nervously.

Little more was said during the drive, the quick young eyes had noted the accentuated sadness in the older woman's face, and her mind began a long, long puzzle to which she found no solution for many years, as to the cause of her mother's heart-broken, despairing expression.

It was nearly six o'clock when they arrived home. The waiting Mrs. Clarke hastily changed Freddie's shoes and brushed his hair preparatory to taking him to his father's library.

"I am to stay up late to-night, Clarke," announced Freddie. "I asked my mother."

"It is your father's permission you must get, Master Freddie," she said, as she ushered him into the sombre, handsome apartment of oak and dull blue morocco, with curtains and carpets of the same colour. A huge table stood towards the middle of the room, it too was topped with blue leather, the contrasting colour note was given by the rows and rows of books in their excellent many-coloured bindings. It was characteristic of the owner of the room that it held no flowers; a very few photographs of his son, and some of famous men, were the only ones visible, none of women, not even of his wife. Another of Sir Frederick's peculiarities was his aversion to animals, never a dog or a cat had been known to enter here; the dislike was mutual, he did not like dumb animals, nor they him.

"Marigold has come home," announced Freddie, when the new book on the "Wonderful country" had been restored to its place on the shelf, and the last ten minutes of his evening visit was approaching.

"So I believe; well?" queried his father.

"She does not observe," pronounced the boy gravely; observation to him was what concentration is to a Hindoo child, something that would help him attain whatever he wished.

Sir Frederick waited, he and his son understood one another perfectly.

"She does not know how many soldiers there are in the German Army, or how many ships in their Navy." The weary contempt of an old man was in his tone.

"Did you ask her?"

"I told her how many soldiers were in the British Army and how many ships in the English Navy, and she said

'Oh really' and that I was a clever little boy; she only notices things that don't matter," he added, his eyes with their lowered lids never left his father's face.

This was the nearest approach to a game these two ever played, one would endeavour to rouse the other's curiosity; no direct questions would be asked, no direct answers given to the veiled feelers, and no bribe was definitely offered, but it was exacted before the desired information was divulged.

"So," and Sir Frederick lighted a cigar.

"She was sorry for Mother." Freddie felt that he was on the fair way to extorting a reward.

"Perhaps you had been troublesome?"

"I had been very good."

Had Sir Frederick asked straightforwardly "How do you know?" or "Why?" Freddie would have replied, "Oh, I don't know," and the game would have tacitly ended, with the honours to the latter; but that would have been an unsatisfactory finale, giving contentment to neither side.

"Your mother may not have been feeling very well."

"She was laughing and singing."

"She may have felt tired."

"She was walking very quickly at the station."

"Perhaps your sister has changed a great deal, and that may have made your mother sad."

"Marigold has brought me some presents from Germany."

"I hope you liked them;" the game was still on.

"She is unpacking them now."

"Then you will see them to-morrow."

"I asked mother to let me stop up later to-night."

"Did she refuse?"

"I was told to ask you."

"Of course, if something was troubling her so that your sister noticed it, she could not be expected to worry whether you sat up late or went to bed at your usual time," commented the man.

"Marigold looked a long time in Mother's face, and stopped laughing and talking, and kissed her before she said anything." Freddie was master of the situation and knew it.

"I suppose Marigold will have those presents for you unpacked by this time."

"Marigold said Mother needed her back, and they both nearly cried."

A knock at the door, Mrs. Clarke's signal, the hour was up.

"It was because mother looked so sad and said she was lonely;" the small diplomat had put all his cards on the table.

Answering Sir Frederick's summons, Mrs. Clarke entered.

"Master Freddie may sit up half an hour later to-night, Mrs. Clarke. He seems rather excited, speaks a little quickly, or I might have made it an hour."

"Very good, sir; come, Master Freddie."

The game was ended, Freddie thoroughly realised that he should have played more carefully; he made no protest, attempted no pleading, he understood, and another time, oh another time, he would be more astute.

After his son's departure, and before he dressed for dinner, Sir Frederick interviewed a visitor, who, saying he had come by appointment, would give no name. This was one Wilhelm Müller, who through the banker's kind influence had been engaged as German master at a boys' preparatory school in Eastbourne. He bore himself like a soldier, and after he had listened to his patron's instructions concerning Freddie's education, for the boy was shortly to be sent to this particular school, Herr Müller spoke most learnedly of armaments, with which subject he appeared most conversant, indeed one would have thought he was a soldier rather than a schoolmaster.

Freddie's mother tongue was English, and with that accent he would always speak whatever foreign language

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he learnt. He already spoke a little French, and Sir Frederick informed Herr Müller that he wished his son to be thoroughly well-versed in the German language, naming certain Teutonic authors the boy was to read.

"Ach dot iss goot;" Herr Müller rubbed his hands together and a wide smile denoted his approval of the literature mentioned. "He will be a great soldier one of these days, dot boy."

Sir Frederick did not contradict this prognostication; it was no concern of the German schoolmaster that Freddie was designed by his father to enter the diplomatic service, not the army.

The conference was a short one, Herr Müller soon dismissed, and Sir Frederick joined his family at dinner.

It was a quiet little party, Lady Mary, Marigold, Sir Frederick and Major Coolter.

"Oh, it is good to be back home, after all there is no place like it," announced Marigold.

"Indeed," laughed Major Coolter, "then where are you going to live when you marry a German?"

"I'm not going to do anything of the sort, not" (as an afterthought) "that I don't like Germans, but I'm not going to marry for years and years, am I, Mummie?"

"I hope not, darling," agreed Lady Mary.

"Have a pleasant journey, Marigold?" inquired Sir Frederick.

"Not so bad, Father Frederick, but we were delayed on account of the strike. There was a terrible riot, troops were ordered out, and they actually fired on the poor people."

"Dear, dear, I did not know they had any troubles in perfect Germany."

"I didn't say Germany was perfect, Ken, so you need not laugh at me all the time," said Marigold; "but there are lots and lots of things they do better than we; as to poverty it is never in evidence there, as it is here."

"Perhaps that is *verboten* like dropping paper in the immaculate streets, or refusing to lie down and let an

Army officer walk over you," jeered Major Coolter.

"Well, really, you haven't to do that exactly," laughed the girl, "but one must be very careful not to offend anyone in uniform, a uniform represents authority, and woe betide any unfortunate who does not give it deference."

"Do they hang, draw and quarter the slack ones?"

"No, Ken, but they punish them," and now Marigold spoke seriously.

"Rightly so," said Sir Frederick. "Laws are made for the protection of citizens; in a large community the lower orders would get completely out of hand if they were not forced to respect authority. In Germany, from what you tell us, this authority is represented by 'uniformed officials.'"

"It is not only the lower classes though, Father Frederick, it is everyone; even I would have been punished had I offended the dignity of a common policeman."

"Oh, darling!" unbelievably from Lady Mary.

"It is true, Mammie, I tell you in Germany one must be careful. Though lots of people resent things that happen, they are too wise to say so outside their own family circle. Now everyone thought it an awful shame that Professor Delbrück should have been fined five hundred marks just because he voiced the popular opinion that it was wrong the Danes should be expelled from Schleswig-Holstein, yet no one dared say aloud what they thought, and Dr. Quarck, who edits a paper, has just been sent to prison because he said something about the Emperor."

"Well, here's to Merrie England," Major Coolter lifted his wine-glass and drank.

"The Germans say we are foolishly weak, because anyone is allowed to say what they please in England, even about the Queen."

"That has not shortened her Majesty's life, or made her any the less popular," reminded Major Coolter.

"Our Royal Family is loved, Germany's are feared;

it is better for a country to be ruled by love than fear," said Lady Mary.

"But the Kaiser is popular?" asked Sir Frederick.

"Yes, in a manner," Marigold hesitated. "I think Mammie is right, he is feared rather than loved, popular in a sort of way, but quietly laughed at. He does such unregal things, like arranging ballets, and choosing the poor Kaiserin's hats, only allowing her about two a year, and he is so conceited."

"Now if you said that in Germany——"

"I would be sentenced to penal servitude, I think," laughed Marigold, "but, then, you see, Ken, I am not in Germany, I am back here in dear delightful England, among you dear delightful people, and oh, I am so happy," she finished, sighing contentedly.

## CHAPTER XI

**I**T was in the year nineteen hundred and one that Freddie first saw the "Great Man," whom he had been so assiduously taught by his father to worship.

He was at the preparatory school in Eastbourne, when Queen Victoria died, and he never forgot the feeling he experienced when he heard the news, which conveyed but little to the other small boys who were his school companions.

Freddie felt an unusual excitement, which with all his unyouthful cunning he was unable to analyse; he sensed a something of immense importance to himself in this historic event, of the death of England's Queen.

His usually pale cheeks were so scarlet that they were remarked on by the boys themselves.

"Look at young Shutters, he's been painting his face," one youngster yelled, and the rest took up the cry and teased Freddie unmercifully. "Shutters" was the nickname his companions with usual schoolboy acumen had dubbed him.

"Schultz's a funny beggar, he never says a thing, he only listens, Shutters in his name," was the verdict soon after Freddie had entered Dr. Pike's house at Eastbourne, and as "Shutters" he was known throughout his school career.

The hour usually spent with his father was now passed in Herr Müller's company, at the express request of Sir Frederick. It was just as the last minute of the time was expiring, on this January evening, that the news ran like wildfire through the school, and quickly reached the German master's study.

"The Queen is dead."

It was one of the older boys who brought the news to Herr Müller and Freddie.

"So, ah well, she was very old," commented the German, but when the bearer of the great news had closed the door behind him, and Freddie was his only audience, Herr Müller let himself go.

"It is great news, this is splendid, it is what we have waited for for years. Now that his grandmother is no more, the Day will soon come." Herr Müller almost ran back and forth as he uttered his thoughts aloud, his speech becoming more and more guttural, until he lapsed into German. "I began to think she would never die, no never, and so long as she lived he would not move, no, he has his weaknesses, he is sentimental, but now there is nothing to stand in our way. We shall be masters of the world, no power can stop us, we shall vanquish and be the conquerors."

"Grant Major says no one can beat us at cricket, that A. E. Trott and Fry and Jessop could beat anyone, that Leander could take anyone in the world on with the sculls and beat them."

"Ahhh, you little braggart, you," screamed Herr Müller, "that is what you think of, this silly sport, you, you numbskull; that is what you live for, stupid games, that is why we will win; while you play, we think and plan and prepare. We teach our boys to fight and be soldiers in our school. They fight their duels when they are no older than you, they are taught to be men, not playbabies."

"I am not a play-baby," Freddie defended himself. "I hate cricket and only play when I have to."

"Yes, yes, that is true," Herr Müller collected himself. "You, Schultz, are different, you are one of us. One day it is to be your proud privilege to be of service to our dear Fatherland, is it not so?"

"I am German, but must pretend to be English, so that I can help more." It was a parrot-like phrase learnt from his father, Freddie repeated it now.

"That is right, that is right, my good young fellow." Herr Müller patted him violently on the back. "We must all work for our country, and me, I will get quick promotion, perhaps, even I shall become a general." For a moment, he chuckled, as he saw his own glorious future, then: "But you, my poor boy, I fear me, it will be too late for you to help. It will be all finished before you have left your schooling, oh yes" (he sighed heavily) "it will be a quick affair. The Day will come soon now, our heroes will march rapidly through the whole world, and all men will fall down and worship us, their masters; nothing can stop us, we are perfect."

"Won't the other countries fight you?" asked Freddie, who felt spitefully inclined towards his master for his depressing statement that he (Freddie) was too young to take part in the great and glorious victories which were on the eve of happening.

"Fight"—there was an intense scorn in the German's voice—"who could fight us, who would dare to stand up against such a power as ours? Poor things, they would be crushed as frogs beneath the wheels of a train, if they attempted to stop us. We are the only people who have an Army, all the other countries in the world could not beat us. No, my good little Schultz, although you are too young to help, still you are lucky to be the son of your father, which makes you one of us."

Herr Müller had never been so guarded in his conferences with the boy as Sir Frederick Schultz had, the latter being naturally secretive, but neither had the schoolmaster ever spoken so plainly as he was doing this evening. Before he dismissed his pupil for the night, this thought seemed to strike him, for he delayed Freddie as he was leaving the study.

"You are a sensible fellow, Schultz, your father told me you do not speak, so?" and the speaker searched the grave, sly little face intently; what he saw there, seemed to give him satisfaction.

"No," he answered his own question. "I think you

will not speak, that is why they call you 'Shutters.'" Herr Müller laughed as though he had perpetrated a witticism. "It would not do harm if a little one like you spoke of what I say" (he was rather soliloquising than addressing Freddie), "these stupid English would take no notice, but it is as well to be discreet; you may go, Schultz."

A few days later, Freddie was hastily sent for and escorted into his father's presence on board *The White Gauntlet*, Sir Frederick's well-equipped yacht. It was now that he rendered his first service to Germany.

Freddie had been summoned in order to meet the German Emperor. His father was ever wishful to impress on the plastic mind the greatness of the man who ruled the country for which the child had been born to help.

It was the night he arrived on the boat that Freddie was wakened from his sleep hastily dressed and taken to the saloon, where his father and one other man were seated in deep converse.

It was the stranger who first noticed the little figure standing near the door.

"Ah! this is your boy, Schultz," he remarked in a rasping, throaty tone.

"Yes, sir; come here, Frederick."

Obediently Freddie advanced, his eyes on his father.

"With your permission, sir," Sir Frederick spoke to the stranger, then to his son. "You may speak as though we were alone in my library. Which is the greatest country in the world?"

"Germany," answered the boy.

"Who is the greatest man living?"

"The German Emperor," and at his reply, the stranger chuckled.

"Now, my son, look, and see what great honour is being shown us." The banker put his hand on the child's shoulder, turning him towards the visitor.

For a moment Freddie looked, it was a picture out of

the book his father used to show him, a picture come to life. Automatically he saluted, and stood at attention, just as he had always done when shown the pages where this same face looked straight at him, with its bold arrogant eyes, its up-turned moustaches; only in the pictures the man always wore uniform, now he was clothed in regulation dinner suit.

"So, that is good, you know me, eh?" He was well pleased, apparently.

"I have seen your pictures, your Majesty."

Freddie had been well trained all his short life for just such an occasion. Sir Frederick was gratified to find that his son seemed likely to do him credit.

"Who am I?"

"His Highness William, Emperor of Germany," faithfully intoned Freddie, with lids well drooped over his eyes, he sensed the fact that he was making a good impression and was not at all embarrassed at finding himself in such exalted company. His cunning little brain was working rapidly, as to how he could extort a reward from his father for giving satisfactory answers to the Emperor's questions. He had just decided in his mind to ask for a bicycle when the next question was rasped out.

"Did you know you were to see me?"

At the answer his Majesty guffawed pleasedly, and Sir Frederick smiled.

"That is what I was born for," said Freddie simply.

"It is a pity he is not older, Schultz," commented his Majesty.

"His time for being useful will come, sir," said Sir Frederick.

"Such a son of such a father would be of great value," the Kaiser graciously conceded. "He is what the Americans would call 'cute.' "

"There is very little that escapes his attention, sir," boasted the father.

"He knows me well enough," laughed the Emperor.

"Everyone knows you——"

"Sir," prompted Sir Frederick.

"Sir," repeated Freddie.

"I suppose they do, such is fame," sighed his Majesty.

"Everyone talks about you, sir."

"I suppose they do," then with a sudden tightening of attention, "what do they say?"

"A man in the train to-day said you were pro-Boer."

With an oath the Kaiser sprang to his feet; for the first time Freddie noticed the malformed arm, which hung inert at his side, while he gesticulated wildly with the other.

As his Emperor rose, Sir Frederick stood up, his look of satisfaction vanished, and he listened with bent head to the flow of rapid talk that fell in German from his Majesty's lips.

Freddie was not sufficiently conversant with the language to follow easily all that was said, but he gathered that the English were stupid swine and heartless to discuss his (William's) sentiments with regard to the Boer, when he himself had so far forgiven their impertinent Press criticisms as to come to England in order to be present at his grandmother's deathbed.

Regretting what he now considered an ill-advised remark, Freddie was thinking sadly of the impossibility of broaching the subject of the bicycle; his brain was very busy.

"The other man in the train said you had changed your mind, because you would not see Kruger when he wanted you to—sir," concisely stated the child, when the Emperor ceased speaking. This remark he felt to be as strongly approved as his former one had been disapproved of.

"The boy may be useful already," said the Kaiser, resuming his seat, and pulling Freddie towards him with no gentle hand. "Tell me what else they said," he commanded.

"They said the new King would be one too many for

you; he would soon find out what you really meant, only I don't remember exactly the way they said it," apologised this small emissary of Germany.

"And——?" barked the Kaiser.

"We had to change trains, so I didn't hear any more," admitted Freddie.

"The new King," scoffed the Emperor, "yes, he will find out when it is too late, eh, Schultz?" The great man's anger had passed. "The new King will not be King long, if ever he is crowned."

"Sir, we are not quite ready," Schultz spoke earnestly. "It would be disastrous to begin operations until the smallest T had been crossed, the last I dotted; the confidence of these English must be restored in your Majesty."

A fresh tirade of invective fell in German from the royal mouth.

"Quite so, Highness," agreed Schultz patiently, when William paused, "but it is so easy to throw dust in the eyes of this simple trusting nation. It is necessary for our success that the suspicion of you should be allayed."

"What suspicion, why?"

"That telegram you sent Kruger——"

"A message inspired by God, my sympathies must always be with the weaker people."

"Then there is this outbreak of Anglophobia in Germany that has caused much comment here, and Count von Bülow's adverse speech in the Reichstag on England and the war; then the rejection of the Labour Bill, has created an unfavourable impression among Socialists throughout the world."

"Pah, these trifles are unworthy of the importance you are attempting to give them. What then, am I not to govern my own country as I see fit, without the interference of a pack of jealous foreigners? Must I consult their wishes, bow to their opinions? You are mad, Schultz!"

"If your Majesty will pardon me, I still advise cau-

tion, and with your superlative cleverness, a little tact and care will gain so much for our cause."

"Yes, I am clever, that is so; I am inspired; what I do must be right."

"That is so; we do not want these people to dwell too much on our new Navy Bill, and, Highness, it is only a few months ago that these swine of English dared seize and search two of your Imperial vessels, the *Herzog* and the *Bundesrath*, on suspicion that they carried contraband of war. Had it not been for their Commander's cleverness, the whole truth might have leaked out. Even as it was we went through an uneasy time on account of the controversy that followed, which Herr Richter's speech did nothing to allay."

"You surely do not propose that I should repudiate my own speech made last month in favour of increasing my Navy?"

"No, Highness, but we do not want these English to increase their own Navy, and to that end I beseech of you not to disregard what this boy has overheard."

"Out of the mouths of babes," mused the Kaiser, "yes, that is from my Bible; it is a wise saying."

Once more Freddie, who had been standing forgotten for some minutes, found himself the object of a momentary survey.

"It is a straw that shows which way the wind sets, and what one man in the street is overheard to say, thousands are saying and thinking."

"Then you suggest I should make a public speech on my return to Berlin, verbally abandoning the building of ships, the training of my Army; a difficult thing to do, and to satisfy my people at the same time."

"No, sir, a far simpler and more effective method would be to use this new King; if you would graciously recall what my son heard, your great intelligence would point a way."

"I shall think of some way to use my dear uncle, this

new King," the Kaiser announced this, as though it was a thought born of his own brain.

"It would be a cleverness worthy of you, sir," flattered Schultz.

"What was it the man in the train said about the new King?" the Kaiser questioned Freddie.

"That he would be one too many for you and soon find out what you meant to do, sir," answered Freddie promptly; the prospect of owning a bicycle seemed nearer.

"The fools!"

"Just so, sir, they are fools." Schultz almost interrupted his Imperial Majesty, in his anxiety to set his thoughts in the direction he wished them to travel, "and so will be easily deceived. It appears they are waiting on the verdict of the new Monarch. Personally it would mean nothing to you, but were the King to confer some public honour on your Majesty——"

"Him to confer some honour on me, on me, who am the chosen of God," exploded the Kaiser, "the thing is absurd."

"Certainly to the humblest of your subjects such a thing would be ludicrous, but as you so cleverly deducted, it would serve its purpose, and make it possible for you to visit England as freely and as often as was necessary for your plans."

"Schultz, I have decided," announced his Majesty after a few minutes of stern thought, "now while my uncle is in a softened mood towards me, while he is still bowed with grief over the death of my lamented Grandmother, I shall play on his feelings with my tact and sympathy, and he shall publicly invest me with some honour that will make the man in the street welcome me as a friend."

"Excellency, you are indeed inspired," breathed Schultz.

Then Freddie was dismissed, and after a stiff salute he departed. Despite the lateness of the hour, he did not sleep for a long time. He lay in the dark wondering if

he could not exact even something more than the coveted bicycle. The next day he stood on the deck of the *White Gauntlet* and watched the imposing spectacle of the funeral of Queen Victoria.

On a sea like glass, the Royal yacht *Alberta* came slowly through two long lines of British and foreign warships. In an uncanny stillness, the wash churned up by the *Alberta* sounded like tears being shed for the great lady, the Royal yacht seemed scarcely to be moving, as though the very boat was reluctant to take her from the home she had loved so dearly.

The heavens themselves appeared to be more beautiful than ordinarily, and the sun softly sank to rest in a last blaze of gold and scarlet, as the *Alberta* sailed into Portsmouth harbour.

The *White Gauntlet* was close enough for Freddie to see the German Emperor standing close beside the new King, as the boat passed through the lines of warships.

A few weeks later when Freddie was back at school, he learnt from Herr Müller that the King of England had created the German Emperor a Field-Marshal of the British Army, and had conferred on the Crown Prince the most noble order of the Knight of the Garter. Also Herr Müller read from the newspapers to small Freddie of the great ovation accorded the Emperor as he drove through the streets of London.

Freddie got his bicycle; he was pleased that he had overheard the talk of the men in the train.

## CHAPTER XII

**I**N the list of birthday honours the name of Frederick Schultz appeared; he was honoured with a peerage, "for services rendered."

It was a popular bestowal, everyone who thought they knew anything gave various interpretations of these rendered services, one and all agreed that he was deserving of recognition.

"Schultz" (or Lord Wellrock as he now chose to be known) "is a wonderful man," was the universally expressed opinion.

In various remote corners of the world Sir Frederick's ascension to the peerage was noted with personal interest by odd specimens of humanity, who traced the circumstance of their present dwelling-place to his lordship's advice and intervention.

In Western Australia a mines manager whose name was Schmitzel, but whose papers proved his contention that he was "Bridish," read the news in the journals and nodded gravely, so did the wild Irishman O'Grady who worked (when he was sober) on Circular Quay in Sydney Harbour; he was an excellent labourer, but unfortunately his fluent tongue was so well known as a stirrer up of trouble among his fellow workers that he had never been able to keep a job in England; and kind Sir Frederick had procured him his present position, shipping him off in a boat belonging to a company in which he (the banker) was interested.

In Buenos Aires it was a schoolmaster called Löwenfeldt; in Johannesburg a post-office official; in Bastia a tobacconist called Schmidt who was also the British Consul in Corsica; in Canada and America there were shipping clerks, policemen, doctors, hotel managers and wait-

ers, whom the Wellrock peerage interested; in Jamaica and Santiago, in Constantinople, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, in fact there were few places where Sir Frederick Schultz was not known as something of a benefactor to at least one man or woman, and, as few of them failed to correspond regularly with him, his mail, apart from his various business interests, was a large one. Even in little far away South Sea Islands there were telegraphists and electricians, who were not allowed to forget that the new peer had been responsible for gaining them their present posts.

He was a great man, indeed, and a busy one, but never too occupied to neglect reading a line that was sent him by the most uneducated of these people whom he had helped, or to fail to write regularly to each one, and so he was in a position to feel the pulse of dwellers in various practically unnoticed corners of the earth, and, if need arose, to use them to carry out any suggestions he might please to make.

Lady Mary was the recipient of an overwhelming shoal of congratulations on the recognition accorded her husband. Everywhere she and Marigold went Lord Wellrock's praises were sung, and now that the well-beloved King was better there were many entertainments, London was full, the season was a very gay one.

Mother and daughter were the closest of companions and went everywhere together, the older woman entering wholeheartedly into the younger's keen enjoyment of things, taking a great pride in the admiration excited by her pretty daughter.

"I am getting terribly old, Mammie darling," sighed Marigold, snuggling up to her mother in the carriage that was bearing them to one of the last balls of the season, "fancy, I will be twenty-two soon."

"A terrible age indeed," gently laughed her mother.  
"Isn't it?" quite seriously, "why when you were my age I was quite a big girl."

"Cheer up, little daughter, you don't look so very

aged," rallied Lady Mary, then, as they mounted the stairs of the mansion they were visiting.

"Surely that is the faithful Dickie to the left there?"

Even in the crush Lady Mary noted the scarlet that suffused the girl's cheeks at the mention of the young Guardsman's name; her mother heart contracted oddly as she wondered if she was soon to lose her treasure.

Later in the evening as she watched the handsome young couple dancing together she admitted to herself that she would be selfish to experience anything but thankfulness were Marigold to entrust her happiness to the Honourable Richard Hillrose, one of the most popular young officers in a crack Guards regiment, yet even while she thought this, she sighed as she pictured what her own life would be when she no longer had her daughter to herself, and her replies to Griselda Transome's continual chatter were very vague.

"I say, Marigold, you look perfectly rippin' in that white kit you're wearin'," Captain Hillrose was saying while Lady Mary was watching them dance.

"Do I, glad you like it," smiled the radiant girl.

"Yes, by Jove, you remind me of one of those white roses you know, the soft moss smelly ones," he explained.

"Oh! Dickie," laughed Marigold, "what a funny way you say things."

"But you do, though," he insisted earnestly. "I always think of you when I see those roses, p'raps it's because they used to grow round your schoolroom window; you remember where we used to make toffee in the holidays on wet afternoons."

"I remember, and when it was your turn to make it, it always turned out sugary," she reminded him.

"By Jove, I believe you're right, but I bet you I can beat you fryin' sausages or bacon, I'm a dab hand at fryin' things," he boasted.

"Poof, you learnt that over a gas ring at Eton, I know."

The dance had ended, but in response to a vociferous

encore the orchestra was repeating the popular waltz of the day; Captain Hillrose evinced no desire to rejoin the dancers or to lead his companion back to her waiting mother; instead he grasped her hand firmly within his arm, and presently she found herself with quick beating heart seated in a secluded nook of the conservatory.

She knew what was coming, and she knew she loved this man. As it always has been, always will be with every woman, she longed yet dreaded to hear what he was going to say. Now that the moment had arrived she would have postponed it, and if she could, would have wept bitterly later on because she had.

"Quite right, I did learn most of my culinary art at Eton. Cooking is not the only thing I can do well."

"Really, clever person, I suppose you think you are a good soldier," she teased, wondering if he could hear the noisy beating of her heart.

"Oh! I'm not so bad, but there is something I'm still better at."

"Mm, polo, shooting, cricket, fishing, hunting, boxing, fencing, swimming——?"

"Loving you."

Just these two words, Marigold's laughing banter died.

"If you would only give me a chance I'd show you how much I do love you. I always have, you know. Oh! my dear, say something, tell me if there's any hope, I know I'm not worthy of you, and it is like my beastly cheek and all that, but I'm being sent to the Rock, and I couldn't go without speaking to you first."

"To Gibraltar. Oh! Dickie, when?"

"Any day, waitin' orders. Will you be sorry, will you miss me?"

"Of course I will." It was the merest whisper, Captain Hillrose had to bend his head low to catch the words.

What he saw in her eyes is best known to Dickie and Marigold, but whatever it was it seemed to tell him all he wished; for the next brief space of time was lost in a heavenly oblivion. It was only in answer to Mari-

gold's happy, nervous little request to be allowed to breathe that Dickie released her from his strong young arms and ceased for a few seconds to kiss her.

"My beautiful, wonderful sweetheart, and are we really engaged?" he asked.

"Well, I hope so, Dickie," she laughed softly.

Immediately his arm went round her again, her lips were sealed once more. When she was free to speak, she insisted on returning to the ball-room, to her mother.

"I know I'm not half good enough for her, Lady Mary, but I will try to make her happy," Dickie promised earnestly.

"I am sure you will, dear boy," Lady Mary smiled bravely.

"It is awfully good of you to say so, my people will be no end pleased. Of course I haven't got much money, but my prospects are good, I am my uncle's heir, and all that sort of thing, and the old man—I beg your pardon, General Cardew, is quite—I mean I am quite popular with him, he said some jolly decent things about my invention, you know."

When Lord Wellrock was told of the engagement he offered his congratulations and wished his step-daughter and her fiancé every happiness, but it was the mention of Captain Hillrose's invention, a new swift-firing short rifle, which really aroused his attention.

"Your idea appears very sound, have you had one made?" questioned the banker.

"No, but I've had a chap down to draw all the designs; some johnnies from the War Office, quite big pots in their way, had a look at them, they seemed to think there was a good deal in my contraption."

"There might be. Look here, Hillrose, if you like to submit your designs to me I will have one made and you can try it out."

"By Jove, how corking of you. I will be no end obliged," thanked Dickie.

"Father Frederick, you are perfectly splendid," said Marigold, who had been present, a silent listener.

"Not at all, I am interested in any such inventions," explained Lord Wellrock. "I have hundreds submitted to me in the course of a year, I regret to say not many of them pan out well, but it is always well to experiment and see."

"I did not know you ever bothered about such things, I thought it was only banks and money and ships you troubled about," confessed Marigold.

"The bank is my business, but there are very many other things in which I interest myself," smiled Wellrock.

"Inventions, luckily for me, being one of your hobbies." Dickie was jubilant. "You see I didn't know who to go to to have one made, the War Office johnnies were polite but not over eager to pay for the experiment, I thought of getting a gunsmith I know to have a shot at it, only it costs such a deuce of a lot."

"It is not wise to trust a stranger with an invention," warned Wellrock.

"That thought didn't worry me, there is some way of copyrighting inventions so I have been told."

"Have you had that done?" questioned the banker quickly.

"Not yet."

"Send your drawings to me, I will have the whole thing put straight for you."

"Thanks no end, but I say, are you sure I am not troubling you too much?"

"Not at all, apart from the fact that inventions have always interested me, you are soon to become a member of my family."

Dickie beamed with pleasure, and Marigold looked so proudly shy that her lover, as he told her afterwards, "could have hugged her to death."

"I thought of this rifle out in Africa and I mentioned it to Tubby Tanqueray, he's of Ours, you know; now he

is a clever chap if you like, he was awfully keen on it, but neither of us knew exactly how to set about getting one made; he has lots of original ideas, one was for a range-finder, from his description it sounded rippin'!"

"Has he submitted it to anyone?"

"No, I was only talkin' to him about it a couple of days ago."

"Friends of yours are welcome to any help I can give them, Hillrose."

"Thanks, I would like you to meet Tubby, he's an awfully decent sort."

"With pleasure, let me know what day you and he can lunch with me at my club; although implements of war are likely to lie untested in actual strife for many a long year to come, I hope."

"And so do I," fervently from Marigold, "now that peace has been declared with the Boers I hope to goodness England will keep out of wars."

"Just as well to be prepared," said Dickie wisely, "remember there are always the Germans."

"Absurd, such a thing will never happen, not in our time," emphatically stated Lord Wellrock.

"I don't know so much about that. I have heard some funny talk about the way the Germans are dyin' to have a cut at the world, especially at us, they say we're trying to hem them in or some such bally rot."

"Idle chatter, Hillrose, the Germans are a simple peace-loving nation, in all large cities firebrands exist, but no sensible person takes them seriously."

"I am not so sure, Von Bülow downed us pretty badly in the Reichstag, and look how they twisted Chamberlain's Edinburgh speech. You can call those johnnies firebrands if you like, but they are pretty influential ones, you know."

"I do not follow these things very closely," admitted Lord Wellrock, "in the main I believe what you say is true, but if you have further followed the trend of events, Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham proved so

effective on the Continent that it resulted in severe commercial losses for Germany, traced directly to the wickedly manœuvred wave of Anglophobia that swept through that country, luckily for the Germans it died as it had been born. Take my word for it, Hillrose, Germany will not go to war unless forced into it to protect her own shores."

"I quite agree with Father Frederick," cried Marigold. "I am sure the Germans are too peace-loving and content ever to fight anyone, unless, as he says, they were attacked, that is what I heard the whole time I was in Germany."

"Perhaps you are both right, but it is just as well to be prepared," said Dickie the unconvinced.

"Peace conduces peace," Lord Wellrock spoke gravely. "Little England is a great leader, if other nations see her ever preparing, ever building warships and increasing her army, they are bound to follow suit, so in time war will break out, perhaps among some of the smaller states to whom we English should set a good example. We should preach peace, talk peace, show we mean to be peaceful, in this way the very least of us can help our country. You, Hillrose, who have given proof of your valour in South Africa, can do much for England by continually advocating peace."

"I would feel rather like a butcher tellin' his customers to become vegetarians," laughed Dickie.

"We must not have any more wars, that would be too terrible," expostulated the girl.

"Amen to that, Marigold," agreed Dickie gravely, "but what I feel about it is, take myself for instance, although I am not expectin' a prize-fighter chap to tackle me, I believe in keepin' fit in case I have to use my muscles." He involuntarily closed his right hand and with his left proudly felt the taut biceps of his strong young forearm.

"I must leave you to convert this fighting man of yours, Marigold," smiled Wellrock. "Don't forget I am

at the service of you and your friends with their inventions, Hillrose," and with a kindly nod he left the young couple to themselves.

"I say, Marigold, I've been doin' a bit of thinkin'," announced Captain Hillrose when they found themselves alone.

"How amazing," bantered his fiancée.

"You can laugh, but I have, and what is more, it is logical thinking."

"Wonderfuller and wonderfuller," quoted the girl.

"Now what is the good of us being engaged?"

"Oh, Dickie dear, you aren't going to jilt me already, are you?" she laughed and promptly paid toll with her lips.

"Now will you be good and listen seriously?" he demanded a few minutes later.

"I was."

"You were not."

"Then I will."

"Well I have been figurin' it out that if you are fond enough of me to be engaged what is to prevent you makin' an effort at bein' a bit fonder and marryin' me?" The sanity of his own reasoning appealed to Dickie, he eyed Marigold triumphantly.

"What a brain," she murmured admiringly, "but *do* you think you are original?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well you know I seem to have heard of cases where other people who were engaged got married," she informed him, her eyes brimming over with mirth. "Dickie, don't, don't; let me go, I can hear someone coming," she warned breathlessly.

"Let them come, I don't care, but here in my arms you stay until you tell me when you will marry me."

"Is that a threat or a promise?" she inquired meekly.

"You darling. I expect to leave for Gib. this week; will you get your kit ready and marry me as soon as I can get leave?" he pleaded.

Eventually Marigold consented to his ardent request, provided her mother had no objection.

Lady Mary joined the lovers and bravely upheld Captain Hillrose's contention that long engagements were foolish, so it was arranged as the young man desired.

As he strode through Berkeley Square along Piccadilly towards the Bachelors' Club Dickie felt that everything was good in this best of old worlds; all unconsciously his lips were humming a couple of lines from the refrain of a popular music-hall song which ran :

"Wait till nineteen hundred and ten,  
We'll have the Germans against us then."

## CHAPTER XIII

BY dint of his very fully developed powers of persuasion, Captain Hillrose obtained leave after a few months' absence, and returned home in triumph to marry his sweetheart.

The old saw :

Happy the wooing  
That is not long a doing,

was justified in this case, for nothing occurred to mar the joy of the young couple, beyond the ordinary irritation any lover feels at the demands made on his lady's time by costumiers, shoemakers, and others of like ilk, deemed by mere man superfluous time-wasters.

At long last (to Dickie's way of thinking) the day arrived, and he waited in St. George's for the arrival of the bride.

The church was very full, for this wedding was one of the events of the season, and Captain Hillrose was frowned on by the majority of the dowager ladies, who whispered among themselves that his radiant face was not right, it savoured of impropriety in their eyes, accustomed as they were to pallor and uneasiness in the bearing of the majority of young men in like circumstances.

"He looks too sure of her, positively indelicate," these good ladies whispered to each other.

Dickie was unconscious of their criticism, nay of their very presence. Of course he was sure of his sweetheart, why not?

She loved him, she had told him so, and he adored her, she was the personification of all that was good and pure and holy; had she been an hour late Dickie

would have remained blissfully happy and sure of her. A stir at the end of the church, the bride's carriage had stopped in Hanover Square, a quick marshalling of Freddie, his fellow pages and the maids of honour, then a wonderful being in soft white came slowly up the aisle leaning on the arm of her step-father.

Now this snowy apparition was standing beside him. Presently one of the bridesmaids tittered aloud at the strength and ring in the groom's responses; the bride's replies, though made in a lower tone, were plainly audible throughout the church.

At last Dickie had her alone in the carriage as they drove to Berkeley Square where the wedding breakfast was laid.

"My beloved, my wife, oh, my wife, I shall love and guard you from harm so long as I live, and after," he added with a broken little laugh.

The honeymoon weeks that followed, spent on board *The White Gauntlet*, lent by Wellrock, were ideal.

One day, to Lady Mary Hillrose's delight, a wireless message was received on the yacht from Lord Wellrock; there was nothing in the communication beyond greetings, but the fact itself interested the bride.

"Isn't it a wonderful invention, Dickie, and to think Father Frederick actually has a wireless on his yacht, I shall send messages to all my friends on ships."

With childlike glee, she kept the young operator who was in charge of the installation busy the whole morning communicating with vessels of war where she and her husband had friends.

"Father Frederick is certainly very up-to-date," she remarked, when, tired of her newly-found plaything, she sat cosily in the saloon.

"Yes, he is an extraordinarily capable beggar," was Dickie's reply.

Later, when the young couple had settled down to real housekeeping in Gibraltar, their high opinion of Lord

Wellrock was not lessened despite their disappointment when he wrote Captain Hillrose the failure of his invention to do all that had been expected of it.

"Knowing something of machines, I personally supervised the construction of your quick-firing short rifle" (Wellrock wrote), "and regret exceedingly that our expectations for its success were not justified" (here he entered into technical details) : "a similar weapon has lately been patented and is already in use in some of the Continental towns, so I have been informed, in which circumstances I judge it would be futile for you to attempt the intricate work any rectifications would entail." The epistle wound up, with affectionate greetings to his step-daughter and kind messages to Dickie.

"What a shame, I am so sorry," exclaimed Marigold.

"I am not surprised, the thing was so simple. I have often wondered no other johnnie had thought of it before," with which philosophical remark Dickie dismissed the matter from his mind.

He would not have taken his disappointment so easily had he been able to follow the journeying of his papers ever since they had left his own safe keeping some three months ago.

After Lord Wellrock had minutely examined the designs submitted to him by the young soldier inventor, he carefully sealed them up, despatching them by Gustav Lemberg direct to Germany, where a gun-making expert in the employ of the Government inspected the drawings; his report was so favourable that Captain Hillrose's new short rifle was soon being manufactured by the thousand.

Acting under Wellrock's instructions the Englishman's plans were skilfully altered in the smallest degree, and in this form were carried back by Lemberg to his Lordship, thus they were returned to Dickie, who tossed them aside and forgot the matter. Even had he troubled to examine the papers, the alterations were so slight, and had been so adroitly executed, that it is ex-

ceedingly doubtful if the differences would have made themselves apparent to him.

On the contrary, young Tanqueray's range-finder was voted a great success by Wellrock's adviser, a German by the way, who grinningly suggested that it be offered to the British War Office, where it was eventually tried and rejected as useless.

Of course, Mr. Tanqueray quite realised that the failure of his range-finder was in no way due to Lord Wellrock, he wrote thanking the latter for his interest. "I don't suppose the thing would have had a trial at all but for your kind intervention, I know any suggestion made by you is listened to with attention," was one paragraph in his letter.

A veracious statement. Wellrock was a serious man, with a well-earned reputation for holding sound views on most subjects. Withal he was so retiring, others frequently gained kudos for voicing ideas which had originated in the banker's brain,—as for instance lessening the strength of the Army. Perhaps it was modesty restrained Lord Wellrock from publicly suggesting such a drastic measure, assuredly it was he who had cleverly inaugurated the notion, which proved a popular enough movement to a war-weary people.

Neither could he be held directly responsible for the incident relative to workers in a munition factory in the East End of London.

Peace and affluence thrived to an unusual degree in this region, small houses had been built, solid little homes of red brick, with roofs that did not leak be the weather ever so tempestuous. There were sculleries attached containing real copper boilers and, luxury of luxuries, a bathroom in each house. They were very proud houses, to have baths of their own was a unique privilege in this vicinity, even though they were seldom used for cleansing purposes, they were useful in which to store coal, outgrown cradles, go-carts, empty bottles, clothes or vegetables.

Pride induced many of these dwellers to become their own landlords, to this end instalments had been deposited, and every week certain sums were set aside to liquidate the debt, in some cases half the purchase money had been paid; suddenly it was decided by the owners of the factory to close down half the works; this step necessitated the dismissal of a great number of skilled workmen.

Consternation ran high, and an ugly riot might have ensued only for Lord Wellrock's foresight in having on the spot German agents to secure many of these good British workmen, who, reluctant though they were to leave their homes, could not, in the circumstances, refuse the remunerative offer and excellent prospects held out to them if they would accept situations in Germany, to which land their fares were paid, and from whence for many years they sent money home, and wrote cheerily. Perhaps these workmen died, for it is some years now since their relatives have heard of or from them. The gay little houses have passed into other hands, the wives (or widows) of the majority of these departed men are eking out a bare existence as labourers in Covent Garden market.

That Wellrock was never thanked for obviating a riot was due to ignorance rather than ingratitude on the part of the English public, for his name never appeared in connection with the matter.

Even during meals, the great man's energy was unabated. He was always chatty and on friendly terms with the most menial servitor whose good fortune it was to come in contact with him.

"Got a table for me, Gustave?" he would inquire smilingly of the *maitre d'hôtel* at a popular restaurant.

"Certainly, Milord, here," personally conducting his honoured guest to one of the best tables in the place, "at this table but yesterday sat the Lord Meliscombe."

"Ah really, poor chap, I suppose he was very troubled."

"He eat his very good lunch, Milord."

"I am glad to hear that, of course we are all indignant at this cruel story of the Prince's morganatic marriage, but Lord Meliscombe, belonging to the Household, must feel it doubly."

"True, true, he must," Gustave looked wise and nodded sagely.

"Yes, everyone is talking about it as you must have heard. Too bad the way these stories spring up. Now let me see, bring me"—and with the obsequious chef's assistance his Lordship ordered a hearty meal and Gustave departed, to repeat to his next customer the latest scandal; the rumour flew, and as these things have a way of doing it grew in its flight, in fact it was one of the most popular pieces of fiction that emanated from the banker's brain. He himself as time went on was surprised at the realism it gained, this was especially borne home to him one night at a dinner-party, when the story was whispered to him by a lady whose own sister's own sister-in-law had almost as good as told the fair re-counter that she had been present at the actual ceremony, which was performed at midnight during a terrible storm, the very identical storm which had indirectly caused the poor sister-in-law's death, and who could doubt a story that had been vouched for by one who (her relatives hoped) was now an angel in heaven.

No one could ever trace the originator of the malicious fabrication. When Gustave was asked the name of his authority, he replied with a shrug of his shoulders, "but everyone speak of it, it is very sad."

So encouraging was this essay on the part of his Lordship that he gave some time and thought to his next fictional attempt, a clever and most interesting story in which the name of a Princess was hopelessly blackened, but very little success attended the effort. True, it found a few leeches, but it proved a waste of the great man's time, chivalry was still rampant in English hearts, the few licentious tongues that repeated the gossip were

stilled by the contemptuous silence with which it was received; so the great lady suffered no annoyance and the faith of the British public in her goodness and piety never wavered.

Wellrock did not have many failures, but this was one of them. To counter it, however, he set in motion a scandal on which Germany fell with avidity, and commented on at great length in their papers. It concerned a meeting in Ireland, inaugurated to arrange an address for a Royal visit, with which they were to be honoured.

The conference broke up in disorder, wild scenes taking place between the loyal majority and a few wild Irishmen, who for excitement would have joyfully smashed their own homes if nothing else offered; these hotheads had dined and wined copiously at the expense of one Gustav Lemberg, and other guttural-speaking visitors, and were escorted to the meeting by their hosts. The upshot was quite sufficient to justify Lemberg's report to his master that—"a satisfactory result ensued."

The Royal visit that followed was not mentioned in Teutonic circles. It may have been that news of it was not sent across the Rhine, or perhaps the fêting, cheering and enthusiastic reception of their Highnesses might not have been received with the same acclamation that the rowdies' conduct had incited.

Ireland was a fertile field for propaganda, the villages were constantly visited by English-speaking foreigners, who encouraged the peasants to remember old quarrels they had almost lost sight of between themselves and their cousins across the Channel.

The blood tie that exists between Celt and Hibernian only serves to intensify any hard feeling that exists. It is always family quarrels that are most bitter.

The intervention of foreigners, stirring up rancour, recalling ancient wrongs, never ceased among the peasantry, who designated their listeners as "rake gintlemin, wid a grand sympat'y for poor ould Oireland, so they have now, and not too proud to drink wid the loikes of

## YELLOW SOULS

us, and spindin' their money as free as larks, rale gentlemin they are."

Untiringly trouble was fostered and kept brewing. It would all help on "The Day."

## CHAPTER XIV

Lord Wellrock had chosen his present title from his English home in Lowestoft—Wellrock Abbey, which he had bought and rebuilt some years earlier.

Old oak had been restored, ancient Gothic frames had priceless stained glass windows inserted, and the wonderful old tapestries which had been bought with the Abbey were objects of especial care.

His Lordship commissioned the invaluable Trent to find experts capable of repairing the valuable canvases, and Mr. Trent in faithful execution of this order showed the same enthusiasm as he did to any of his master's commands. He went methodically to work, until he found an old Irish lady, a Mrs. Fitzgerald, who made the repairing of tapestries a specialty, for that purpose engaging many young women, one among them being Anne Raymond, whom she rightly considered one of her most expert workers. Despite that fact, Anne received a bare living wage, but then, as Mrs. Fitzgerald pointed out, there was really no great demand for the restoration of tapestries; she looked on herself as a martyr and more or less of a benefactress, in engaging these girls at all.

To Anne was entrusted the task of repairing the most precious of the tapestries, so she resided for the time being at Wellrock Abbey, it being deemed useless and destructive labour to remove the canvases to London.

Anne's history was commonplace enough. Her mother married for love, which is equivalent to saying she made a poor match, one that had caused the usual nine days' wonder, for everyone had expected the pretty flighty Noreen Lancaster with her looks and distinguished relations, to marry well. The Lancasters had no money,

only birth, and Noreen as well as her parents loved to spend money; it had come as a great surprise when, in the middle of her first season, she had run away with good-looking penniless young Larry Raymond.

Of course there was nothing to be done but drop Noreen and her devoted young husband, which her relatives promptly did. After a glorious year of happiness, pretty Noreen died, leaving her husband a legacy in the shape of a girl baby.

The inconsolable widower in a few years followed his beloved Noreen. Anne had been placed in a French convent, where her school bills were irregularly paid while her father was alive. On his death, she, a child of twelve, had learnt from the kind nuns that she was an orphan, and a penniless one to boot.

For a while she remained in the convent, eventually being sent to England as a governess, drifting from one post to another, until she found work with Mrs. Fitzgerald.

Anne had inherited something of her mother's good looks, the same creamy smoothness of skin, and silky black hair, with large Irish grey eyes. Her delicately slim figure belied even the nineteen years she admitted to at the time she came to Wellrock Abbey.

Her breeding combined with convent training and her experience of life in the workaday world, young as she was, had given her a quiet self-reliant dignity.

On his visits to his country residence Lord Wellrock noticed the girl, but, beyond a courteous greeting, he had not spoken to her, until one wet afternoon when he found her seated on a ladder in a gallery intent on the upper part of a tapestry.

"You are very clever with your needle, Miss Raymond," commented Lord Wellrock.

"Thanks to the nuns," replied Anne, wrinkling her brow over her work.

"You were educated in a convent?"

"Yes, in France."

"But you are not French?"

"No, I was born in England, my parents were both Irish."

"Living now?"

"No."

Little more was said then, but in the days that followed Wellrock came continually to the gallery and learnt to know Anne thoroughly.

Beyond week-end visits, Lady Mary was very seldom at the Abbey. On the contrary, Lord Wellrock, whose presence was often needed, spent a great deal of time supervising the laying of very solid concrete foundations for his lawns and other matters, such as electric installations; for some of this latter, foreign workmen were employed, who might have claimed Korea for their native land, for all the simple country folk could say to the contrary. Lord Wellrock said they were Swiss, the foreigners themselves (most superior young men who smoked expensive cigars, and never flirted with the servants or village girls) volunteered no information as to their nationality or themselves, their guttural accent would have led an experienced ear to think they were Germans. Their time was mainly spent on the roof, and in doing something to the chimneys in the rooms set aside by his Lordship for his own use.

Perhaps it was on account of their skill that these particular workmen were employed by most Germans who came to reside in England, or it may have been that the employers did not want the electric installations on their roofs and in their chimneys spoken about.

Anne was an idealist, as Lord Wellrock soon discovered, he also learnt that she believed lack of money to be the root of all evil.

"I suppose if you had plenty of money you would go back and live in France," he remarked to her one afternoon.

"No, I would stay in England."

"What would you do here?"

"Oh such a lot, such a lot." Anne paused with her needle in the air, her eyes shining at the many thoughts that raced through her brain.

"Fill up your time with dances and parties and theatres, like other girls, I suppose."

"No, indeed, I would not."

"Come now, Miss Raymond, you don't mean to tell me you despise gaieties."

"I do not despise them, but they would not fill my life," she stated earnestly.

"What would?"

"Trying to find those who really needed money——" Anne paused.

"And——?"

"Give it to them."

"You would soon find yourself a very poor person," laughed Wellrock.

"Oh, I know it sounds foolish, but is not so senseless as it appears. I do not mean I would go round giving it to everyone who asked."

"Then what?"

"Well now," Anne abandoned her work, and sat forward, gazing earnestly at her questioner, "I have often thought if I had money I would employ someone to find out where it could really do good, and how best to supply the need."

"What class of person do you suppose needs help most?"

"People like my own parents," replied Anne, simply.

"What would they do with it?"

"Use it properly."

"On buying luxuries?"

"No, they would be able to bring up their children properly, teach them to become useful citizens."

"But your class, as you term it, Miss Raymond, is not of the artisan type."

"A country needs many types, well-trained soldiers and sailors, officers as well as men; good politicians;

good leaders are as necessary for the welfare of a city as expert tinkers, tailors and candlestick makers."

"We have them in abundance."

"Quite true, we have admirable leaders, but we lose many."

"Through lack of money?"

"Yes."

"Do you really think so?"

Lady Mary had said her husband never did anything without an object; she was right, from the moment he learned that Anne Raymond was well-born, without family ties, and poor, he had entered her in mental caligraphy as a person to be used; how, he was just at this moment rapidly deciding.

"I am certain of it, oh, if you only knew what a difference a little money makes! I am sure if my own parents had possessed money, they would be alive now."

"Tell me about them."

"I can tell you very little. My father was in the Navy, living on his pay when he married my beautiful mother, who was penniless. He had to leave the Service, which he loved, to try and make a living on land. My mother died soon afterwards. Just think what a difference a little money would have made to them; I would especially like to help sailors."

"I think we might find a way for you to gratify your generous wish, Miss Raymond."

"Oh, Lord Wellrock, how?"

During the brief pause that followed, a whole gamut of emotions showed in the girl's eyes, excitement, hope, fear, apprehension, doubt, and then despondency. She picked up her needle and resumed her work.

"Yes, it might be done." Lord Wellrock had accomplished some quick thinking, his next words, uttered in a decisive brisk tone, recalled the look of eager expectancy to Anne's eyes, making her pause with needle in mid-air.

"And you can help."

"I, how?"

"Your idea appeals to me, it is a good one. You shall find out who wants money, and if I agree with you, they shall have it."

Anne's cheeks blazed, her eyes positively danced. "Can you really mean it, could such a fairy dream actually come true, oh, could it?"

"It could and shall," smiled the banker.

"I am to find out, and I can, what sailors—or may it be sailors?"

"Sailors if you like, yes, as you have chosen we will confine our operations to helping only seamen. Now, young lady, we will talk business, what are you earning a week?"

"Twenty-five shillings."

"Hm! to begin with I shall pay you twenty pounds a month——"

"Oh, believe me, I had not thought of—of——"

"Of bettering your own lot when you mentioned your philanthropic ideas to me," supplied the man, with a kindly smile at the distressed face and clasped hands of the girl. "I know that, but you must let me arrange things as I choose; if you will not permit me to do so, then," with a sigh, "I am afraid your sailors will be the losers."

"Oh, please, it only seemed as though you thought——" again she hesitated.

"That you were a self-seeker? Nothing of the sort. Five pounds is to be your weekly remuneration, unless I think it necessary to increase the sum, for one never knows what a thing of this sort might grow into; you shall discover the deserving poor ones, and I will do the rest, on one condition."

"Yes."

"That in no circumstances whatever is my name to be mentioned."

"How splendid you are, how noble, how good," cried Anne, tears of admiration in her eyes.

"Not at all, I am a rich man, and will never miss the money this is going to cost. You agree to my stipulation?"

"Indeed I do, I will never tell anyone of your generosity, without your permission," promised the girl.

"It would be as well if you started on your new work at once. Perhaps your best plan would be to take a little apartment, you would place me under a debt of gratitude if you would engage a pensioner of mine, or ours, my wife as well, for Mrs. Clarke was our son's nurse; she seemed a capable, intelligent creature, and would serve as housekeeper, chaperon and maid. With such a person to placate the convenances, you could invite your protégés to visit you, and so without their knowledge ascertain their positions, and play fairy godmother."

"Wouldn't they be rather hurt if they found out? I mean, wouldn't it seem like—well, almost a sort of—spying," she hesitated.

"It would be spying," he agreed, with an easy little laugh, "an ugly word for so beautiful a motive. You are to help them, not to harm them——"

"Oh, no," the shocked denial was startled from her.

"Exactly, and it would harm them, hurt them rather, if they discovered that a woman, no matter how pure her incentive, had been the means of assisting them; they will never know, for who is to tell them? Assuredly not you, and I think you can trust me."

"I am sure of that," she agreed warmly.

"Unless you can think of a better way, mine seems the soundest, so we can conspire to assist them without ever wounding their pride."

Eventually this plan of campaign was decided upon.

Left alone, Anne's fingers trembled as they flew rapidly back and forth on her work; she was dazed with the wonderful thing that had happened, it seemed too good to be true. How wrong she had been in her first instinctive dislike of this generous magician, with all

her impulsive heart she reprimanded herself, and idealised the wealthy banker.

As he departed, Lord Wellrock smiled, well satisfied. He had procured another secret agent for Germany; that his dupe was unconscious of the harmful part she was to play in the lives of many of her countrymen made her so much the more useful to him; he was well pleased.

On his return to London, he sent for Mrs. Gustav Lemberg, alias Mrs. Clarke.

She came obediently, looking spongier as to the nose and skin, and more drab in general appearance than when she first arrived from Germany.

Her employer's first words set her little mean eyes peering anxiously, her mouth fell wider agape, and her noisy breathing became a snore.

"You have not obeyed my instructions," his voice was exceedingly harsh, "I told you never to speak your native tongue, or let it be known you understood any but the English language, that you were neither to write nor receive communications from Germany."

"Only once, Milord—I—I—"

"You lie, you were only discovered once, you mean."

"I—your—my aunt was dying."

"You disobeyed me," his voice went on relentlessly. "It was bad enough for my son to make the discovery, but still worse for the fact to have reached the ears of my wife."

"It was when Master Freddie came home for his holidays, it was the only letter, I swear it. I took it to my room where no one came, not even the servants. I read the letter, it was from Aunt Augusta, begging for a line from me before she died. I was writing it, Master Freddie called me, he was cross because he could not find an old watch he said he had left in the schoolroom cupboard. He would not wait, I had to go at once and look, I must run quickly. I went, I searched everywhere, but could not find it; he did not stay with me, but went away, then he came back, he remembered taking it to

school, and exchanging it for a bicycle bell and pump, he had been to my room to see if I had stolen the watch, he saw the letters and read them. He wanted me to take him to a music-hall at night; I told him that was impossible, he said I must, or he would tell you of the letters and that I spoke German. He seemed to know that you would not be pleased. He had just said: 'If you don't I shall tell that you are a German'—when Lady Mary came in. She heard. I am sorry," she spoke in quick jerks, interspersed with irritating sniffs.

Lord Wellrock did not appear to be listening, yet not a word escaped him, he was visualising the scene, innately admiring his astute and most pertinacious son, who had set his heart on going to a music-hall. Having failed with Mrs. Clarke, he succeeded in gaining his desire from his father, with this very piece of information with which his ex-nurse was now being upbraided. A clever little rascal, decided the parent.

"You disobeyed me," the harsh voice continued, as though there had been no interruption. "I considered having you punished; be more careful in the future, I will not overlook a second lapse. You are to go to a Miss Raymond, make her so dependent on you that she will not be able to do without you, watch all that she does, note everyone who visits her, all letters sent or received, what she talks about to her callers, how she lives. Have all information ready in your mind, not in writing, to give me when I send for you. I have finished."

Mrs. Gustav Lemberg Clarke was still snoring wakefully, when she arrived back in the small top room in a Bloomsbury boarding-house to which she had gone, on her summary dismissal from Berkeley Square, after Freddie's discovery.



## CHAPTER XV

**F**REDDIE'S nickname of "Shutters" followed him to Eton, whither he had gone with a head full of instructions from his father. He understood quite clearly that his was no ordinary school-boy's career; it had been instilled into him that he was never to overlook an opportunity of "being useful," that was the expression used, and the boy tacitly understood what was demanded of him. From his birth he had been taught to work for Germany; it was not so much love of a country he had never seen that dominated him, but rather an inherited hate of England, the jealous hate that had caused his father to shake his puny fist in impotent rage at the stately old dome of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The boy had been told by his mother not to forget to say his prayers, always to tell the truth, and to be a brave little gentleman. Major Coolter had given him a sovereign.

"Play the game, old chap," Kendall said; "don't fight unless there is any real cause, but when you do, hit hard and clean, and shake hands at the wind-up."

"Your schoolfellows will be useful to you in after life; learn all you can about them, learn their weaknesses, a little knowledge rightly used is a power as you will discover, above all keep your own counsel," Lord Well-rock instructed during his old-time hour in the library with his son, on the evening preceding the boy's departure for the famous old College.

To all these advisers Freddie listened with his habitual drooping lips; to the first two he made no answer, his father he set thinking by replying with a question.

Indicating a picture of the Kaiser which stared arro-

gantly up at him from the last page of a new volume from Germany, Freddie asked :

"It is for him and the great country" (for so these two always designated Germany) "that we are working, but what will they do for me?"

Apart from the question itself, the mere fact of a direct query coming from his son amazed the banker, it was not the usual method adopted by either of them.

"What do you want?" inquired the elder.

"I don't know yet, but I will some day," was the unhesitating reply, clearly denoting he had already pondered over the matter.

"Wait till you do know," advised Lord Wellrock, "but remember you get nothing for nothing in this world; the more you want the harder you will work, trifles count. I am giving you great opportunities. I have had to form my circle of acquaintances late in life, you can make yours now. Disregard nothing, disdain no one, a clever person can use everything and everyone, it is a fool who is used instead of using."

With precocious craft Freddie followed the paternal advice. At the end of each term, when he came home from his holidays, his mother found it increasingly difficult to rejoice at having her son with her, although she never ceased struggling against the repugnance with which his stealthy slyness filled her, forcing herself to keep the boy as much as possible in her company, endeavouring to eradicate his mean traits and instil noble sentiments in their place.

Lady Mary always accompanied her son back to Eton. After one of these journeys she drove to Aldershot to stay for a few days with her daughter and son-in-law, and worship at the pink, dimpled feet of her two grandchildren, little three-year-old Christopher, or "Kiss," as he pronounced his own name, and tiny baby Ruth. Willingly she joined the young parents in their nursery romp before the small couple with their wonderful mops of red-gold curls were given their tub and tucked into bed.

"Unique children," crowed Captain Hillrose, as, laughing and dishevelled from a final bear bout with his son and heir, he followed his wife and her mother down-stairs.

"Well, they are, aren't they, Mammie?" demanded Marigold.

"They are perfect babes," their grandmother agreed, "and so extraordinarily intelligent."

"They are the sweetest things on earth," chimed in Marigold.

"Oh, come on, wonderful mother woman, I'll give you a start and race you to the hall door," broke in the buoyant father.

"Mammie, isn't he awful?" gasped Marigold a few minutes later, as laughing and breathless she sank into a chair beside Lady Mary after a mad scamper down the stairs and along the hall, where she had been captured by her jubilant husband and waltzed wildly round to a shrilly whistled accompaniment by her partner, "isn't he perfectly appalling?"

"You are a pair of children yourselves," smiled their guest, "and not fit to have charge of those blessed angels in the nursery."

"We haven't," Dickie assured her earnestly, "nurse has them in tow; we, their respected parents, are only tolerated by her, she keeps us both in our places I give you my word."

How happy these two were, how wonderfully, delightfully happy; it was good to be with them, to witness their absorbing love and trust in one another. These were the most contented moments of Lady Mary's life.

The babies too were a great joy to her; if only Freddie had been like them. She suppressed a sigh, and brought her attention to bear on what her daughter was saying, she was speaking of Freddie.

"I got the promised letter from him, Mammie, he wrote to me about Ruth."

"Did he, darling, he didn't tell me," she might have

added that her son told her nothing, but she kept the thought to herself.

"Yes, he wrote and said he was so pleased to hear 'Kiss' had a sister, and he would love to send her a present, but, being so short of funds that he could not even use his bicycle for want of a tyre, I would have to take the will for the deed; wasn't it too quaint of him?"

"What did you reply?" Lady Mary's face suddenly lost its softness, her voice too had grown harder.

"I wrote that it was very sweet of him to have thought of such a thing, and Dickie sent him a couple of pounds."

"Oh, you shouldn't, you shouldn't," cried Lady Mary. The suppressed emotion in her voice, the tragedy in her eyes, puzzled her hosts.

"It was nothing," apologised Dickie gently, "boys are all the same. I remember when I was a nipper I was always deuced hard up."

And so the incident closed, but it was one of the many that left a bitterness in her heart.

During Freddie's years at Eton many small incidents which reached his mother's ears caused her uneasiness.

One day an old friend, the mother of one of Freddie's schoolfellows, laughingly recounted to Lady Mary a story of the astuteness exhibited by her son in tricking a new-comer into breaking bounds, afterwards informing on the unwitting culprit, who was punished by being confined to the house—whereupon Freddie impersonated him at a tea given at Windsor Castle to a chosen few of Eton's scholars!

Lady Mary joined in the laugh caused by the story, but the flesh inside her lower lip was bitten through, in her effort to restrain the disgust she felt from becoming evident.

Only once had she spoken plainly of her feeling for her husband and son, that was to Kendall Coolter. Neither of them had ever again referred to the conversation, although sometimes the woman felt she must speak of her trouble, must share it with someone. The

need for sympathy was very strong, but with an effort she fought back the desire; after all these people were hers, her husband, her son, she must remain silent.

Kendall had not forgotten her confidences, he realised more than she suspected something of what she was suffering, and in his honest, simple way, indirectly endeavoured to make light of the cunning and meannesses that continually revealed themselves in father and son in their family circle.

It was during Freddie's second year at Eton that the storm broke in the Berkeley Square house.

Lord Wellrock discovered that a secret and world-important meeting of representatives from several countries was to be held; he had ascertained the place, an unpretentious shooting-box in a certain forest, but so far he had not been able to locate the exact date. With incredible craftiness he learned which countries were interested and the names of the statesmen who were to be present.

When the world heard that a certain President had gone yachting, that another was taking a golfing holiday, that this leader of politics had retired for a sojourn to his country estate, that one game-shooting elsewhere, Lord Wellrock knew the time was rapidly approaching for the conference at which two English statesmen were to be present.

One of these latter had quietly disappeared from public view, and despite his myriad secret channels, the banker could learn nothing of his movements. Then it was he bethought himself of Freddie, for Lord Gelby, the baffling politician, had a son at Eaton, in Freddie's house.

He motored to Windsor and called on his astute son. "Gelby's son is in your house, isn't he, Frederick?" questioned Wellrock, as they strolled through a field.

"That's Golliwog, as he is called here."

"Know him well?"

"Yes."

"Clever?"

"Bit of an ass, he's a wet-bob, and a pet of the Head's."

"Why?"

"Because he's keen on games and makes a good show with the sculls," sneered the disdainful youth, who abhorred sport. "He gets more money than I do," he added resentfully.

"How do you know?"

"He's my fag and it comes in his letters."

"Do you see his letters?"

"Sometimes, but old Tugs the janitor knows."

"Oh," the tone which uttered the monosyllable made it an encouraging question.

"Tugs drinks, and one day when he was a bit squiffy and Golliwog was ragging him, he lost his wool and told Golliwog he had more money than sense."

"How did Tugs know?"

"Opened the letters perhaps," laconically.

"Money comes from his father I suppose?"

"Mostly, old Gelby's no end rich."

"Where is Lord Gelby now?"

"Don't know."

"You could find out I suppose?"

Ah! this was the real purpose of his father's visit. Now what could he exact, what did he want? Yes, ten pounds. With this sum he felt confident he could wheedle young Clinton into selling a wonderful mechanical engine which had cost this small plutocratic schoolfellow more than double that sum last week.

Freddie wanted this toy, his brain had been scheming ever since he saw it as to how he could become its possessor; not by purchasing it with his monthly allowance, for though this sum was not niggardly, it mainly went to the tuck-shop, for inherited from his father was a great love of food. Now joy, and Eureka, sang Freddie's brain, Clinton's mechanical engine might soon change hands.

"I might," was all he said in answer to his father's question.

The two well-matched individuals wandered on, conversation languished, they were both busy thinking.

Presently Freddie launched into a description of the toy on which his heart was set.

"It cost twenty-five pounds," he stated.

"A lot of money." Now it was Wellrock's turn for tacit understanding, it was their usual method, they were acting true to type.

The information he was seeking was worth much more than the sum his son had mentioned, if necessary he would pay it; but he never believed in paying one penny more than he could avoid doing, neither would he pamper his son by a too plentiful supply of pocket money, whatever extra Freddie got must be craftily obtained.

Presently he learned that ten pounds might suffice, and thus the matter was left, the precocious youth realising that the sum mentioned would be sent him if the desired information was procured, Lord Wellrock equally knowing that this amount mentioned was his son's price. No outspoken bargain had been made, but each knew the other, the understanding between them was perfect.

"You are very careful with your letters I hope, Frederick," counselled the father before he left.

"I always seal my letters and post them myself," was the satisfying reply.

"Quite wise, not that I would suggest for one moment anyone would tamper with your correspondence, but it is always well to be cautious. Private letters convey so much valuable information, it is only right that anyone convicted of meddling with them should be severely censured; to be caught doing such a thing would irrevocably forfeit one's reputation."

Despite astute pumping of Golliwog, Freddie drew blanks. At last he hit on a cunning scheme, he bided an opportunity until Tugs, the janitor, was in a somewhat

muddled condition, then Freddie produced a letter for which he had stealthily searched many mails, until, in fact, he had found the envelope for which he was looking addressed to Golliwog in Lord Gelby's writing.

The youthful conspirator indulged in a boisterous ragging, in which this especial letter was torn open.

"You'll catch it, Tugs, look what you've done, torn this envelope."

Tugs expostulated indignantly and angrily.

"Well, never mind how it happened, perhaps I am partly to blame in playing the goat, so I'll take the letter and explain it was an accident. I don't suppose it'll matter much anyway, so long as the Head doesn't hear; if he does he might guess you'd been drinking, but I'll try to make it all right, if there isn't any fuss I won't split," and Freddie coolly walked off with the opened letter in his pocket.

The incident passed without comment, for Golliwog innocently accepted the brief explanation which Freddie offered when delivering the letter, a suspicion that it had been deliberately opened never entered the honest mind of Lord Gelby's son.

It was a successful essay, the purlonged epistle had been a brief note from the statesman peer telling his son he was leaving London for a few days and would write him on his return.

"Your father's fond of fishing, isn't he?" Freddie asked blandly.

"Yes, he goes to Scotland whenever he can, we've got rippin' fishin' there."

This response apparently justified the detailed communication Freddie penned to his father, hereafter taking a proprietary interest in the mechanical engine.

The episode would have been quite satisfactory to father and son, had Freddie not made the fatal error of addressing two envelopes at the one time and putting the letter intended for his father in the cover directed to his mother, concisely relating all that had occurred.

Lady Mary did not notice her son's mistake until she had grasped the horrifying significance of the facts which stared up at her in neat small writing.

As she read, her head and heart became numb, her body went cold with shocked disgust, then a wave of rage shook her whole being, she gave herself up to a feeling she had long fought against, one of complete hate for her husband and his son, yes, *his* son, she fiercely informed herself, not hers. Freddie had never really been her child, the bare thought of his narrow head and sly eyes filled her with loathing.

For a long time she sat holding the letter in her hand and thinking. Incident after incident came before her, could it be that her husband was a spy?

No, she dismissed the thought as fictional, such things only live in highly sensational literature; this was real life.

Still he was a German, or at least he had been born one. For years she had puzzled over a thousand and one things that crowded to her mind now.

If he was not spying for Germany, what interpretation could she put on his curious underhand methods, his everlasting seeking after fragments of knowledge which assuredly could not be of assistance to an ordinary banker.

A spy, a spy, a contemptible German spy. Her thoughts flew to Marigold and Dickie; no, they must never know, but whom to turn to, who could help and advise her, Kendall? No, no, a thousand times no! She *had* married this German, the little horror whom she had borne *was* bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, although not a drop of her good English blood appeared to exist in him.

While she sat in a whirl of conflicting emotions, forgetting the engagements she had been dressed ready to fulfil, forgetting the car with its chauffeur and footman who had been waiting her bidding outside the front door for some weary hours, Lord Wellrock returned home.

He knocked, but receiving no reply entered his wife's

sitting-room unbidden. Ordinarily such an unusual visit would have startled her, to-day she knew why he had come. Discovering Freddie's mistake, he had hastened to her room to see if he was too late to prevent her becoming aware of the blunder. One glance at the tragic figure was sufficient to warn him, not only that his wife had read the letter Freddie had intended for him, but also that its contents had disturbed her; he must be on his guard.

"I saw your car waiting, and heard that you had not been out. You are quite well, I hope?" he inquired suavely.

"I have read a letter from—your son." Her cold, harsh tone, the pause before the last two words confirmed his suspicions. What had the little fool written; however, he did not allow his uneasiness to appear in voice or expression.

"What has he been up to now?" the question was artistically careless.

"Spying—"

"My dear Mary—"

"As you have taught him to do."

"I do not understand you."

"As you have taught him to do, as you yourself have done all your life."

"You bewilder me; what do you mean?"

"What I have said," she retorted quickly, "that you are a spy, that your son is a spy."

"Are you in earnest?"

"German spies."

"Good God, you are mad, do you know what you are saying?"

"Only too well."

"Something has happened to you, you must be—ill," an eavesdropper would have sworn the man was genuinely concerned for his wife's welfare.

"Yes, something has happened to me, I have been blind, but now I see."

Ever since his entry, Wellrock had remained standing just inside the door, now he approached his wife, and seated himself near her. He had two objects to accomplish, one was to obtain possession of the letter which she still loosely held as he observed, without appearing to do so, the other was to disabuse her mind of these grave suspicions.

"Mary, what is the matter, won't you explain?"

"You had better read this letter."

Ah, that was good, but none of the satisfaction he experienced revealed itself, he appeared almost reluctant to accept the proffered missive.

As he read, his wife studied him, her eyes never left his face. His many years of self-control stood him in good stead, the information he had so eagerly sought was here, he was pleased, yet the only emotion displayed was a fictitious one of careless contempt.

"Very reprehensible of him, I must speak severely to Frederick," he remarked as he finished reading and proffered the letter to his wife, then as she shrank back, as though loath to again touch the document, he thrust it with apparent unconcern into his pocket.

"A very foolish and wrong thing for him to have done, but it in no way explains your extraordinary accusations."

"There is no explanation necessary from me to you."

"Pardon me, I beg to differ, you have voiced the most unwarrantable charges against me; in common fairness to us both you must give me your reasons for doing so; even were I a criminal being tried at the bar such justice would be allowed."

There was a short silence, he watched her, gentle, grave, puzzled, or so he seemed.

Proof, he wanted proof. God help her, she had none, at least none that she could actually bring forth as such.

Then as incident after incident arose before her mind's eye, she found herself slowly speaking.

"I have watched you for years," she was saying, "ever

since the first year of our married life. Ever since the boy was born, even before, I think, there were countless small happenings that puzzled me. Your mean petty household spying, contemptible though it was, I might have disregarded as serious, only that I found you carried these methods into every phase of your life. I despised them, but thought it was your—un-English way of furthering your business ambitions; it was not long before I abandoned this explanation as unsatisfactory. Then if it was not to gratify such aspirations or social ones, for I gave you all that you wished in that sphere, what could it be? That was the question I spent many sleepless nights trying to answer, now I know and furthermore I realise that subconsciously I have long suspected the truth."

"This is all most distressing, but too vague. I gather that you disapprove of my character; that pains me, but for the moment we must confine ourselves to the terrible imputations you have made against me. Now if you could specify——"

"Specify, give you date and text for all that has roused my suspicions, no, that I could not do," her words came quickly now; "wait" (as he was about to interrupt her), "this I can tell you, I can quote various incidents where you have met friends of mine who have frankly owned to their temporary monetary embarrassment, you have helped them, then—used them."

"I am bewildered," confessed the banker. "Think calmly on what you are saying, you are indignant because I have been the modest means of helping your friends out of trouble, my dear Mary!"

"And driven some of them to their deaths, as you did John Lucas; others, more hardened than he, have smothered conscience, and become your tools. He, poor boy, could not override his fine principles at your behest, as his letters written to me on the eve of his death showed, he preferred to die. It was a long time before you managed to persuade brilliant Berry Shipley to

change his political views. I fought against you there, but you had him too firmly in your grip."

"Shipley is a shining celebrity," commented Lord Wellrock.

"He is a drunken gas-bag," corrected his wife bitterly. "There are many others whose lives you have ruined. There is your own son——"

"Our son."

"Your son, whom you have trained to be the despicable little spy this letter proves him to be." She finished the sentence disregarding the interruption. "In this as in many other matters, I have tried to frustrate you, but the bent of his mind was not to be turned by me, his nature is too like yours."

"Let the matter of this letter be understood between us, Mary. It was a foolish boyish thing to have done, but one which he shall be severely reprimanded for——"

"By you?"

"Certainly."

"Hm!" it was an ugly little laugh, "because he has carried out your instructions, or for placing the letters in the wrong envelopes."

"That is unworthy of you."

"True, so are you, so is your son, so is the life I am living, unworthy of any true Englishwoman. You may deceive other people, you cannot dupe me; I cannot put into actual words what I feel, any more than you can satisfactorily explain away this letter of Frederick's, in which he brags of his vile trick, played on a drink-sodden old man, using as you do a person's weakness in order to gain his desire, and knowing the little creature's tricky methods. I understand, just as you are meant to do, that ten pounds to buy this toy of which he writes is his price. Can you explain away the incident in connection with Hermann Schott——?"

Hermann Schott, how had she met him, this was a surprise. Lord Wellrock's eyes narrowed dangerously.

"I do not recall the name," he lied.

"I will remind you. Last year, when a war between England and Germany came so dangerously near, a Mrs. Schott called to see me. She was in great distress, her only son Hermann had got into trouble. Like myself she was an Englishwoman married to a German, poor soul. This Hermann, a lad under twenty, she had always believed was employed in an honourable position in the City; he was in reality a spy for Germany, the reason of her visit to me was her recent discovery of this fact, through Hermann's sudden disappearance. For some weeks her efforts to trace him had proved unavailing; eventually she traced him, he had been detected in espionage by the police and was imprisoned. After many heartrending failures she managed to see him; he was bitterly resentful, young as he was he had been given dangerous missions by the people whom he served, these he had faithfully executed, the last task he had been given to perform had proved his downfall, he was discovered and imprisoned. At his persistent assurance that you, the wealthy celebrated banker, would help him, speak for him, you were communicated with by the authorities. Denying all recollection of having even heard of the boy, you magnanimously consented to go to the prison and see him. You went; gaining a private interview with the poor thing, you learned what he had to tell you, wrung him dry of all information, inquired if he had any letters or papers, heard he had not, then departed after coolly denying in his presence you had ever seen him before, insinuating that he was suffering from delusions. There behind iron bars like a trapped rat he told his mother the whole story. She was making no excuses for him, the woman was heartbroken, equally at her son's work as at his plight, from which she could find no one to lend a helping hand to extricate him, not one of the gang, who had used the foolish unimportant fool as a tool, would move a finger to assist him."

"And your gentle heart was touched I suppose." An

undercurrent of craftiness vibrated through the innocuous-sounding sentence.

"You are wrong, you cannot claim me as a fellow conspirator." A white hot scorn blazed in Lady Mary's eyes, she had understood the careful reasoning that had prompted the man's remark.

"But why did the woman come to you?"

"To plead with me to use my influence with you. Although her son had never met you, he knew of you, and was confident, so his mother assured me, that you could extricate him from his painful position, if you would use your power as a wealthy banker. The Schotts thought you would do this for them, as the mother expressed it, because you too were German; Hermann was seeking for information for you at the time of his arrest."

"Did they bring you proof of this absurd story?"

"Sufficient to satisfy me of its truth."

"Then why did you not come to me?"

"Why should I intervene to help an enemy of my beloved country? Mrs. Schott interviewed you, her pleading proved unavailing."

"Did she? Really so many importunate persons visit me in the City with the most extraordinary stories that I cannot be blamed for forgetting this especial case."

"She tried to see you at your office, and failed. Again she came to see me, and without my knowledge, secreted herself in the house, and forced herself on you in your library."

"I have a vague recollection of some such unpleasant occurrence, but might I ask, if you were not party to her scheming, how you became aware of her ruse?"

"She came to see me once more, after it was all over, after her boy, driven to despair, had hanged himself in his cell. I, grieving for the crazed soul, helped her to leave all that reminded her of her boy's fate. She is living, I will not say how or where, but so long as she exists a bitter hate of Germany and its people will live with her."

"How strangely you talk, almost as though I were a German, whereas you know that excepting for an accident of birth, I am a loyal Englishman."

"It is an insult to England to mention her name in the same breath of which you speak of yourself. One feels no repugnance for a person who works, or fights, for the country in which he was born; the despicable ones are those who worm their way into the bosom of other nations, making their homes among its people, shaking them by the hand, whilst plotting for an opportunity to stab; dastards like yourself, who fawn, cringe, bully, buy, cajole, using any dishonourable method to gain the confidences of those whom you call friends, listening, prying, sneaking to glean knowledge to be used against them. I believe you even married me with no other object in view than that I too might prove useful to you in your diabolic machinations. Now I know, and with all my might I will work to discredit you, if needs be I will even denounce you to the authorities for what you are, a German spy."

"It is being reluctantly forced upon me that you really believe the appalling accusations you are making. Anything more cruelly unjust could hardly be conceived. Are you sure you are feeling quite well, that you are not feverish, or your head is not troubling you? You must remember, my dear Mary" (his voice was silkily soft), "none of us are getting younger, and as the years creep down upon us we are apt to engender strange hallucinations."

"These are no fictitious figments of a disordered brain, but facts, facts, facts."

"I will feel far more satisfied when you have seen a specialist. I will leave you to rest now, I will ring for your maid" (touching the bell as he spoke); "you must take care of yourself—"

"Did you ring, my Lady?" The stolid elderly Grant had entered in answer to the tinkled summons.

"I rang, Grant; her ladyship is not—quite—herself."

Lord Wellrock seemed to find some difficulty in expressing his wife's condition. "I think she should rest. Will you permit me to call in a doctor?"—this last addressed to Lady Mary.

"No." She could hardly articulate the monosyllable, her sense of impotent wrath choked her.

"I am sorry; I will leave you now. Take great care of her Ladyship, Grant." Lord Wellrock closed the door softly behind him.

## CHAPTER XVI

THE routine in Lord Wellrock's home went on much as usual, the only change was his marked solicitude for his wife's health. The beginning of each day his body-servant would be found waiting at the door of Lady Mary's apartments with: "His Lordship's compliments, and how is her Ladyship this morning?"

Sometimes the valet would bear a note, in lieu of the verbal message, often flowers would accompany these inquiries.

The icily polite replies which were sent for the sake of appearances the servants noted, and gossiped over among themselves.

"'Is Lordship worships the ground she walks on,'" confided the valet in the select seclusion of the below-stairs *élite* who were deemed worthy of a place at the house-keeper's table.

"Does he, now!" Grant sniffed aggressively, secretly wishing her beloved mistress would treat the master with an outward show of appreciation, "to keep them busy-bodies' tongues from waggin'."

"'E does, Miss Grant, and I defy you or anyone else to say to the contrary. 'Oo ought to know if I don't? 'E's worried pink about 'er Ladyship. I ought to know; I'm with 'im more than anyone else, ain't I?'"

"Them as knows most ses least," snapped back Miss Grant. "I know and I see what I see, but there's some people is born talkers, and there's some not. I happen to be one of the last and latterly named persons, whatever other persons might like to say."

"Throwin' off at me I take it." Mr. Rapp was hurt. "That's the way with some people, can't join in a friendly

chat without losin' their 'air. I meant no offence and I hope none will be taken, Miss Grant."

"I am not in the 'abit of taking offence where none ain't meant, Mr. Rapp, but I never was one to gossip; I never 'ave been, and I never will be. I 'ave always belonged to the best families, and I know my place, and if 'er Ladyship don't show no over and above at responding to 'is Lordship's kind inquiries that ain't here nor there, which I'd have you remember, *if you please, Mr. Rapp.*" Miss Grant felt she had scored; she looked quite the lady as she picked up her cup, delicately sipping the tea, her little finger rigidly outstretched.

"I am not saying you're not right, Miss Grant, nor you either, Mr. Rapp," chimed in Mrs. Bolney, arbiter of conduct, morals and housekeeping in this establishment, "neither am I saying you're wrong. As the motter goes, 'speak as you find,' and I must say 'is Lordship goes to a rare lot of trouble over 'er Ladyship's 'ealth. Twice 'e's sent for me now, and 'Bolney,' 'e ses, 'Bolney, I want you to give especial attention to 'er Ladyship's meals,' 'e says; 'attend to her food yourself, Bolney,' 'e ses, 'then I'm sure it will be all right.' 'Very good, Milord,' I said, 'no complaints I hope?' and 'No, Bolney, no complaints,' 'e ses, and I came away. I must say I felt a bit flustered and upset, which is no wonder seein' it's the first time 'is Lordship's spoken to me since I've been in the family. Which I must say 'is Lordship does eat 'earty, while to the reverse side of the picture as you might say 'er Ladyship don't eat more than 'd keep a sparrer alive." Mrs. Bolney sighed heavily, and toyed daintily with the mutton-chop bone on her plate.

"Which words, Mrs. Bolney, only bears out what me and the master thinks about 'er Ladyship's 'ealth, and take what offence some people will, to where no offence is meant, and there's no gettin' away from it 'er Ladyship does take on queer notions. Now if I had to tell the truth in a court of law as it were, and was brought to swear to it, I'd say 'is Lordship was 'it with a shock

when 'e 'eard that 'is lady 'ad took 'erself off up to Alder-shot to see the Captain and Lady Marigold, on the very day Master Freddie comes 'ome for 'is 'olidays. 'Good God,' 'is Lordship ses, 'can she have actually forgotten 'er boy was returnin' to-day!' 'e ses more to 'imself than to me. 'Can't say, Milord,' I answers, then turns 'is mind off by askin' if 'e'd wear 'is dinner-jacket or tails, and 'e 'eaved a deep sigh and ses 'Tails, Rapp,' just like that."

"And if I might be so bold as to ask, if a lady what was born a lady can't suffer with 'er nerves 'oo can?" Miss Grant tossed her head triumphantly, and pushed her chair back from the table preparatory to rising. "And this I can say, and when I say a thing you can take it for gospel, though I don't 'appen to be in a court of law where you're bound by oath to tell the truth, the truth I'll tell wherever I may be, oath or no oath——"

"Thank you, Miss Grant." Mr. Rapp was scathingly sarcastic.

"Them as the cap fits, best wear it," smartly retorted Miss Grant. "What I was goin' to remark when I was so rudely interrupted was that there's nothing annoys my lady so much as to have a fuss made about 'er 'ealth, and if she was to 'ear some of the talk that goes on about 'er, well, all I can say is there'd be some people, namin' no names, who'd be lookin' for places, and you can take your change out of that, Mr. Rapp," and Miss Grant, feeling that the honours lay with her, left the room with her head in the air.

The gossip below stairs was only an echo of that in which Lady Mary's friends were indulging, beginning from the night of the afternoon when Freddie's misplaced letters had led to the bitter scene between husband and wife.

After a few hours of despairing heart-ache, Lady Mary, feeling the need of distraction, dressed, and drove to a reception, which she had faithfully promised her old friend Lady Roofe to attend. Towards midnight Lord Wellrock, on entering the ballroom, espied his wife. By

a series of petty manœuvres with the babbling Mrs. Transome on his arm, he met his wife face to face in the centre of the brilliantly thronged room. Immediately he halted. "Mary"—he seemed startled, surprised—"you have come, you are better?"

"Better?" Her eyes were coldly scornful as she echoed the word.

"Yes, from your—er, indisposition."

Beyond a sneering little laugh she disdained to answer, and swept on, never even seeing Griselda Transome, who had listened open-eared to the brief conversation.

Wellrock executed another of the "'eavy sighs" which had touched the valet's heart, and stood gazing after his handsome wife.

"What was the matter with Mary?" asked Mrs. Transome curiously.

"I beg your pardon?" The question seemed to recall his apparently wandering thoughts to his companion, and to the fact that he was keeping her standing still in the middle of the ballroom.

"I must apologise if I was a little distract, but, well you see, Mrs. Transome, Mary has not seemed very well lately. I had begged her to rest quietly at home this evening."

"The poor dear," gushed the ever-young Griselda; "then I must forgive her for cutting me."

"I beg of you to pay no attention to such a trifle," pleaded Lord Wellrock, his distress patently evident. "Had she been quite herself my wife would never have done such a thing, to you of all people. When she realises how she hurt you, she will be most penitent."

Ordinarily the incident would have passed unnoticed, but Lord Wellrock's deep chagrin at his wife's seeming lack of courtesy stamped it indelibly on the gay little gossip's mind.

"I have been advised to persuade her to consult Durham, he is a good man, isn't he?" The banker questioned Mrs. Transome in a flatteringly confidential tone.

"Sir Long Durham, the brain specialist? Oh, yes, I hear he is *the* authority now; none of us can call ourselves insane and be believed, unless he permits us to do so," gurgled Griselda. "But do you really think poor dear Mary is——?" A lift of the eyebrows conveyed the gist of the unfinished question.

"Good heavens, no! I must earnestly beg of you to disabuse your mind of such an awful thought. The queer little notions that take possession of my wife's mind are merely due to over exertion; these racketty seasons try the strongest of us."

Before the night was over, half the room was pitying poor Lady Mary; in a few weeks' time all her London was discussing her state of health, and sympathising with her devoted husband who, privately and publicly, was assiduous in his attentions to his wife.

He would stand watching her at any place of public entertainment, ready to place a wrap across her shoulders, to procure her a seat, a cup of tea, to order her car, give her his arm; he was always near at hand to save her trouble or exertion. His devotion was widely commented on and applauded, his conduct held up as an example to many careless husbands.

It was not long before Lady Mary realised what her world was thinking. She was filled with a despairing rage at last; feeling she could stand no more, she fled to Wellrock Abbey, but this move availed her little, excepting to rid her eyes of the hated sight of this "devoted husband."

Wellrock Abbey was soon filled with a gay crowd, invited by its master to stay there and cheer "poor Mary."

As soon as she conveniently could, she got rid of her husband's guests, and moved on to pay a long deferred visit to Lady Roofe, at Stormont Castle, in Dover.

"Upon my word, Mary," laughed her hostess, after the visit had lengthened to a week, "that good man of yours shows the attachment of a lover. This is the

second time to-day he has telephoned through from London to inquire how you were, and to ask if there was anything you needed that he could send down. I only wish Bab would pay me half the attention Wellrock shows you."

"You need not envy me, Helen; Bab is very fond of you, he is adorable," counterpraised Mary.

"The pity is he lets so many women find him so," severely replied Lady Roofe, who had long reconciled herself to taking the various amours of the gay Admiral with a worldly philosophy.

Stormont Castle was daily besieged by messengers from London, bringing fruit, flowers, books, letters of courteous inquiry, and urgent entreaties that she should take great care of her health.

In weary disgust Lady Mary returned to Berkeley Square, attempting to find momentary forgetfulness in the old round of gaieties, but everywhere she went it was the same, even though she developed a circumventive cleverness in evading her husband's loathed attentions. The "poor dear Mary" attitude into which her friends had fallen almost drove her really insane.

Several times she seriously thought of consulting Kendall Coolter, but a shy reserve, through which she had only once broken, an innate sensitiveness, stayed her from confiding even in this old and devoted friend. And at last, while she struggled with herself to find words, and courage to utter them, she suddenly surprised on Kendall's face the same look of pitying concern she had begun to know and dread in the expression of all with whom she came much in contact. And now Kendall!

It was monstrous, she told herself, as she drove slowly round Richmond Park, whither she had ordered her chauffeur to take her, in order that she might be away from prying eyes, and think alone. What was she to do? To whom could she turn?

Ceaselessly she revolved these two questions in her mind, but no solution presented itself.

Proof—everyone would want proof—and what had she to give them? Nothing but a jumble of incoherent incidents, a volume of suspicions.

No one would credit her; that fiend in human form had undermined her reputation for sound common sense, so much so that trifles, which in themselves amounted to nothing, were exaggerated into significances that bewildered her.

If she was late for an appointment, or too early, if, as often happened, one of her numerous engagements slipped her memory, or she changed her mind with regard to her plans; if she warmly upheld a point of view, or did not alertly answer when addressed; if she forgot her purse, her muff or fur, even dropped her handkerchief, she would immediately see the look she dreaded, that of quick sympathy for her supposed failing intellect, leap into being.

Sometimes she would sally forth keyed to a defiant mood, she would adopt a pose of merriment and gaiety, and let the world see that they were wrong in their surmises; she would force her husband to admit her brain was as clear and bright as the sanest among them. Then in the midst of one of her brightest sallies, when she was really beginning to succeed in throwing off a little of her cloud of black care, with diabolic cunning her tormentor would approach.

"My dear, please do not excite yourself, it is so bad for you, you know. Let me take you home."

On the utterance of such gently spoken words, her spirits would drop to zero. Strive as she would, she could not at the moment regain her gay pose.

The same result accrued if she carefully retained a placid demeanour; this fiend whom she had married would make her composure marked as something extraordinary.

"Come, you must not be so sad, Mary," he would gently insist; "it is so bad for you to let yourself become depressed you know."

Any protest on her part always left her worsted.

She signalled to the chauffeur to stop, and getting out, bade the man wait. The beauty of the park, with its grand old trees and thick bracken, where the sad-eyed deer played, was quite lost upon her.

If this man could defeat her, she who knew him for what he was, what earthly chance could unwarned innocents have again him?

She must forget her own troubles, and think broadly. Her husband was a German spy; she knew it as positively as though he had confessed the fact. More hideous still was the thought that Freddie was being trained as a traitor to the country in which he had been born. This problem she relegated to be battled with at some future date; now, she must concentrate on finding some plan that would help her circumvent the man spy.

Seating herself beneath one of the trees, she gravely analysed every incident that had served to arouse her suspicions.

Yes, her husband was spying for Germany. She had always vaguely known such persons existed, every country employed them; but *her* husband, against *her* country! Yet what could she do, who would believe her? And again, was he so dangerous? After all there might never be a war between England and Germany, or even if it did come, it would not be in her time, but supposing—

Only a small red rim of the sun showed like a wicked old eye peeping over the horizon, as though he was watching kind night cover up the earth with a soft black blanket of dark for its night's sleep, when Lady Mary rose from her seat and walked rapidly towards the waiting car.

Determination was writ large in her every movement.

She had decided to call at the Foreign Office, and tell her cousin, the present Duke of Shadford, to whom on her father's death the title had descended, all she suspected.

Now that her mind was made up to this definite move, she felt much easier.

"Marigold, you here, how delightful," she cried, as she entered her sitting-room, and found her daughter there.

"Yes, I had to run up to consult the dentist, so flew in here for a chat with you, Mammie."

"How nice; have you had tea?"

"Ages ago, it is very late you know."

"Yes, I suppose it is; I forgot the time."

"Oh, Mammie."

"Why——?" So her daughter had heard that she was beginning to fail mentally. Her startled exclamation, accompanied by an expression of grief, warned her over-sensitive ear, attuned to recognise the sympathy sign, that Marigold had been told the lies circulated about her. That was the real reason for her presence here to-day; the visit to the dentist was an excuse.

"Well, my dear, what of it, do you never forget time?"

"Yes, of course, darling."

The placability of the tone, instead of soothing the elder woman, set every over-strung nerve tingling; with an effort she smiled pleasantly.

"How are the wonderful babes?" she asked.

"Very well; Kiss had a slight cold, but he is quite better now."

"And Dickie?"

"Robust as ever, and how are you, Mammie?"

"Quite well."

"Sure you are not over-tiring yourself?"

"My dear, no. I really must show you those ivory miniatures of Kiss and Ruth—the man is an artist," Lady Mary chatted gaily, as she touched the bell-push. "I will send Grant for them. Come in," she cried in answer to a tap on the door. "Grant, bring me those— Why, who are you?" she broke off in amazement to ask, for instead of Grant's well-known figure, there stood a stocky elderly female, neatly garbed in black, whom Lady Mary had never seen before.

"I am Shale, please, Milady."

"What are you doing here?"

"I have been engaged to help Grant, Milady."

"By whom?"

"Lord Wellrock, Milady."

"When?"

"I have just come in to-day, Milady."

"Where is Grant?"

"I don't know, Milady."

The constantly reiterated "Milady" irritated her questioner even more than the heavy-looking creature's presence.

"Send Mrs. Bolney here to me."

"Very good, Milady."

"The life tints on these miniatures are wonderful, you must see them," remarked Lady Mary; her calm voice belied the beating of her heart and the slight trembling of her limbs. "Ah, Bolney," as the housekeeper entered, "pay Shale a month's wages in lieu of notice, and see that she leaves the house immediately, and send Grant here."

"Very good, Milady."

With a supreme effort she continued her criticism of the children's pictures.

"Mammie, what does all this mean?" interrupted Marigold.

"The incident of this Shale woman? Some little plan of my husband's."

"But what would Father Frederick do such a thing for, without consulting you?"

"He does many things I do not understand."

"But not horrid things; he is too fond of you to be wittingly unkind."

"Do not trouble your head about these things, dear, tell me about Dickie and the babes."

"No, Mammie, I want to understand about you. I am not a child now, surely you can talk to me."

For one moment the elder woman felt a wild impulse

to confide in her daughter, but an unselfish feeling prevailed; she would not burden those young shoulders with her griefs, but she would disabuse Marigold's mind of the idea that she was ill.

"For some time past my husband has conceived the erroneous notion that I am—ill; his never-ceasing solicitude on that score is trying, that is all, dearest."

"And you truly really are quite well?"

"Quite."

"I am so glad, but why don't you tell him so?"

"That would make no difference."

"You speak so bitterly, Mammie, I am sure something is wrong."

"Many things have occurred to try my patience lately, little daughter. If I ever need your help I will let you know."

Then Grant entered. Her eyes were red from crying, she was plainly borne down under some heavy grievance; however, beyond a sniff, she restrained her feelings.

The miniatures were brought, discussed, and admired.

"I must run off now. I feel much happier since I have seen you," Marigold remarked ere she departed.

All the way back to Alredshot in the car, and later when she confided the incident of Shale's transitory introduction into her mother's service to Dickie, she puzzled over the affair.

What possible object could her step-father have for saying her mother's health was failing, unless he really thought so? Thinking it over, Marigold realised the impression Wellrock had conveyed to her was that the illness took a mental, rather than a physical form. She determined to see more of her parent, and ascertain the truth for herself.



## CHAPTER XVII

**A**S Lady Mary dressed for the dinner-party, at which she was to play hostess that night, her determination, formed earlier in the afternoon, to confide in her cousin, solidified.

The quiet hour spent in Richmond Park had been of inestimable value. It had helped her control every sign of the intense irritation which the introduction of a strange servant into the household, without her knowledge, had caused her; through this restraint, she had convinced Marigold that her brain was not in the parlous state which Lord Wellrock's innuendos suggested.

Shale's advent was a carefully-calculated move. What was its portent Lady Mary had not yet fathomed, but she knew it behoved her to walk warily, to escape any pitfalls laid by her crafty husband.

It was a pity she had been so frank in telling him how much she knew, how much more she suspected; it had warned him, he feared her; so with diabolic cunning he was seeking to discredit beforehand any accusations she might make against him.

The usually imperious Grant still showed signs of agitation, but beyond a slight sniff or so, she went about her duties like the well-trained maid she was. Her mistress, noting the white face, and scarlet-rimmed eyes, was more gentle even than usual.

In her evening gown of oil rose and gold, Lady Mary looked particularly well.

"I do not need that," she informed Grant, when the latter handed her an ivory-handled hare's foot and rouge pot; "my own colour is quite sufficient to-night."

"Yes, Milady, you are looking very well; and beg pardon, Milady, but I never was one to need much sleep, so if anyone is to sit up with you at nights, I'd be only too pleased to oblige you."

"Thank you, Grant; but why should you or anyone sit up with me at night?"

"That person," the concentrated scorn expressed in the noun would almost have justified an action for slander, "what came in to-day said that was to be 'er duty, Milady."

"I sleep very well at night, and need no attention."

"So I said, Milady, but because she had been in doctors' 'ouses, she give 'erself 'igh and mighty airs. To 'ear 'er at tea, anyone 'd think she was a trained nurse; no one could talk to 'er; she'd 'ad 'er orders direct from 'is Lordship, so she said."

"His Lordship is inclined to be over-anxious about my health, Grant, but I am quite well, and the woman has gone."

As her Ladyship swept slowly down to the drawing-room to await her guests, she pondered over the maid's words. Sit up at night with her, like a trained nurse. The full force of her husband's schemes concerning herself struck forcibly; he was trying to make her appear insane. If she was not very careful he would succeed; indeed she must be cautious.

It was a brilliant little dinner-party, consisting of a dozen people, among whom was Philip Duke of Shadford, and Angela, his dark, vivacious wife, who ran any hobby in which she was engrossed to a frayed and wearied end. Just now her aim in life was to be taken seriously in politics; when the House was sitting she was a regular attendant in the gallery, and took copious notes; in fact, as she informed all and sundry, she was quite worn out with her arduous work. Everyone politely sympathised, and, when she was not looking, impolitely winked.

Angela was thoroughly enjoying herself to-night. She

sat on her host's right hand, and a famous politician was seated the other side of her. Her Grace considered she was making history: she was a great favourite of Well-rock, he used her in countless ways that would have amazed her to learn. For instance, she would have indignantly repudiated a statement that attributed the origin of the "Peace and Good Fellowship League" to her host, vociferously arrogating to herself the kudos for the thought that initiated the movement; and yet she would have been mistaken, for it was Lord Wellrock who set the germ of the idea loose in her active brain. She was also his unconscious tool when she started the "Little Friends for Foreigners" movement, one of which she was very proud; it had been so useful in obtaining employment for hundreds of aliens, the majority of these strangers being of German origin, whom her Grace's influence helped to various posts, confidential and otherwise.

Two people present to-night were grateful to the Dutchess for recommending such treasures. Ellis Hetherington, the famous politician, depended absolutely on his German secretary, and Lady Roofe, the Admiral's wife, simply could not think how on earth she managed before dear Angela found her Schmidt, a pearl among maids.

Now, while she accomplished a table trick of which she was very proud, that of gracefully eating an orange, her thoughts were being deftly turned to a most helpful project: briefly the idea was to effect an exchange among higher-class labourers, such as electricians, mechanics, skilled workmen in factories and dockyards, clerks and stenographers.

Presently, Angela was evolving the idea from her own brain (so she thought), and with her usual enthusiasm was attempting to explain how such a plan could be worked.

A committee must be formed, a small sum of money subscribed, for really it would not cost much: just an

office, stationery, stamps, one paid secretary, and assistance towards passage money, then these clerks and people who wanted to visit other countries and learn the language could exchange places with somebody else, who wished to come to England.

It was an excellent new hobby.

"And you two men must help me," she informed her immediate neighbours.

They both laughed, and gave the necessary promises, which Ellis Hethrington immediately forgot, but Lord Wellrock proved a man of his word, for not only did he send her Grace a cheque as his contribution, but he found her what she termed "a perfectly adorable secretary," who took complete charge, and arranged all wearisome details.

The committee, when it noticed anything beyond the fact that it was "rushed to death attending these meetings and things," remarked that a great many more Germans came to England than workers of any other nationality. The Teuton secretary who was so "adorable" may have had something to do with this.

The committee never learned (it would have taken no interest had it done so) that many of the English artisans returned home to find their late employers reluctant to reinstate them, preferring to retain the much cheaper Germans. The latter learnt more than the English language, and displayed an inordinate curiosity in other things which had nothing to do with their professed trades.

While Lord Wellrock was engaged with the Dutchess of Shadford, his wife, seated at the far end of the table, was trying to find an opportunity to tell her cousin she wished to call on him at the Foreign Office on the morrow.

Towards the end of the meal, when she had turned the dull Cabinet Minister who sat on her left over to Lady Roofe, who was seated near him, the chance she had been looking for came.

"Philip," she said quickly, "I want to see you."

"At your service, Mary," he replied.

"To-morrow?"

"Yes, I'll drop in at tea-time."

"No, not here, at the Foreign Office."

"Right, if you prefer that."

"I do, eleven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Make it twelve, if you don't mind."

"Certainly; and Philip, I don't want you to mention to anyone at all, not even Angela, that I am coming to see you."

"Right; nothing wrong, I hope?"

"I will tell you to-morrow." She felt, without looking up, that her husband was watching her; she smiled at her cousin, as though they had been discussing the merest banalities, then, seeing that her guests were ready, gave the signal, and rose to leave the room.

Following the general movement made by the men, after the ladies' departure, the Duke of Shadford found himself sitting by his host.

For a time the conversation was universal, then, following some remark made in allusion to a famous ball to which the majority of his guests were going on, Lord Wellrock frowned.

"Oh, these infernal London seasons," he sighed.

"Bit of a bore, but one must do something," Ellis Hethrington remarked.

"Personally, I rather enjoy gaieties; it is of my——, for some of the women I was thinking: they tire themselves to death," complained the banker.

A momentary pause, and in the talk that followed Lord Wellrock took no part.

Presently he leant forward and addressed the Duke of Shadford in a confidential undertone.

"How did you think Mary was looking?" he asked.

"Topping. Good colour and all that."

"I was wondering if she seemed at all feverish."

"No, not that I noticed; not ill, is she?"

"No—no, that is, not exactly. To tell you the truth,

Shadford," with an appearance of great frankness, "I have been concerned about her lately; she gets curious notions into her head, about the servants, her friends, me, even our boy, young Frederick——"

"Good Lord, that's bad." The Duke was not fond of Wellrock, neither did he particularly dislike him, but he was sincerely attached to his cousin, and he sympathised with Lady Mary's husband, who seemed genuinely troubled about her.

"It is a great grief to me. Her doctor advises consulting Durham, but she won't hear of it."

"She seemed all right." Even as he spoke, Philip remembered the request for a private interview, the first Mary had ever suggested: it *did* seem a bit queer.

"Oh, yes, I hope it's only a phase, and will pass over. Her treatment of the boy troubles me: she almost seems to hate him."

Then they all rose and left the dining-room, to disperse and meet later on at reception or ball.

"Philip"—Mary spoke quietly and earnestly the next morning in the stillness of the Foreign Office—"you were told last night that I suffered from strange fancies."

"Well, you see, my dear girl——" The Duke tried to find non-committal words to fill in the pause his cousin made after her statement.

"Do not trouble to assure or contradict me, Phil." He was relieved at her amused little laugh. "I *know*, I knew what you would be told, when my husband noticed me speaking quietly to you at the table. I shall tell you what I have come for, and you must use your own judgment. Do you think we have anything to fear from Germany?"

"In what way?"

"Ah, my dear cousin, please don't look at me like that. I can assure you I have not come to discuss Foreign politics; my question was not without reason."

"I'm hanged if I can answer you, Mary. If you mean war, well, I don't think so, not in our time at least."

"But it nearly came last year."

"It did look like a bad dust-up for a time, but it all settled down again."

"Could spies do much harm, here in England, I mean?"

"Well"—the Duke puffed out his lips, and rubbed his shaven chin— "I believe, but I do we don't want

"What is done with them?"

"Chucked overboard, I suppose."

"And secret work against England all the time?"

"My dear girl, I suppose every office, all the government departments, this very office, employs Germans; they're a servile lot of beggars, and make excellent servants. I wouldn't be surprised if they all received pay from their own Government for any fragments of information they can pick up."

"I did not mean that class, Philip, I was alluding to the rich influential ones, those who have made it their life's business to spy and manipulate large concerns—influential people, all for the one purpose—would they be a menace to England?"

"If ever trouble did come between the two countries, I should say they would be jolly dangerous, but in such an event we would pretty soon put them where they couldn't do any harm. What's the idea, Mary?"

"I want you to be very patient and listen carefully to what I have to tell you. It is about my husband."

"Wellrock—you don't think he is a spy, do you?"

"He is."

"Oh, I say——"

"He is, and a dangerous cunning one, too."

"Good God!"

For half an hour the woman talked, and the man

listened. Sometimes a look of incredulity would come into his eyes, to be replaced by one of disgust, but beyond interjections of contempt or surprise, he did not interrupt.

She touched as lightly as possible on the part played by her boy, but the accumulated suspicion of years regarding her husband, now for the first time she voiced. The telling hurt her, she felt her anomalous position most keenly. With Spartan courage she deleted all thought of self, and spoke for her country.

There was no trace of rancour in her words, nothing of insanity. Her well-modulated voice broke harshly once or twice: the man to whom she was speaking understood that she suffered in the telling.

"—and now that I have told you, I will feel much easier. Philip, you will know better than I, whether what he is doing constitutes a serious danger. I have felt so helpless."

"Poor old girl," was the cousinly consolation; then: "Of course Wellrock is a German, as you say. One forgets that when thinking of him, but he has been here so many years, and he is naturalised, he has adopted England as his country."

"In order that he may the more securely work against her." There was calm finality in the statement.

"Look here, Mary, I'll think the matter over. In the meantime I'll keep an eye on the beggar. It is all very terrible, and all that sort of thing, but for the life of me I cannot see what can be done. There is nothing to pin the chap down, nothing that would justify my going to him and saying politely, 'Look here, Wellrock, you are a dirty scoundrel; clear off, or I'll kick you out.' Why, he would only laugh at me. England is free, a deuced sight too free; her doors are open for all the scum of the world to enter, and batten on us. It is all beastly unpleasant, but I don't really see he can do much harm; anyway, don't you let it get on your nerves. I will see a bit more of the beggar, and find out what he

is up to. It is quite impossible for Germany to attack England; no power on earth or sea can get past our Navy."

So, sympathising, consoling and cheering, the Duke of Shadford sent his cousin on her way, much relieved at having unburdened her mind.

The banker was quite well aware of his wife's visit to her cousin, and the purport of it, but when his Grace deliberately sought him out at his Club, Wellrock gave no sign of his knowledge. He was courteous, suave, and baffling, leaving it to Philip to introduce the subject of Mary's health, indicating delighted relief on hearing her cousin express his opinion that she was quite normal and well. His attitude of devoted husband left nothing to be desired, it induced the thought in the Duke's mind that perhaps after all Mary may have been mistaken; she had so long dwelt on trifles, that they had magnified in her estimation. The simple honest English gentleman's suspicions were soothed, but even then, as he tranquilly smoked Lord Wellrock's excellent cigar, he was a marked man, one likely to prove a nasty obstruction.

This was nineteen hundred and eight. It was not until several years later that Wellrock succeeded in getting a strangle-hold on the source that could gently but firmly enforce the Duke of Shadford's retirement. A certain reputation was saved at the cost of honour; Philip was shelved and his place filled by as patriotic and true an Englishman as Lord Wellrock himself.

## CHAPTER XVIII

THAT no one loved him did not disturb Freddie in the slightest degree, in turn he cared for no one on earth but himself.

At school he was tolerated, and made a host of acquaintances; getting some lickings, and evading many which he richly deserved by the simple process of having placed the would-be avenger under an obligation to him. This he had found early in life the most expedient method of helping him over rough passages, and of gaining him favours, although there were times when all Freddie's wealth and influence could not save him from the consequences of his misdeeds.

Many a youngster reluctantly conceded to requests made by Shutters, because he was in the latter's debt, monetarily or otherwise.

Now at Oxford (where he was known as Frederick Scott, instead of Schultz, his father having by deed of poll changed the family name), he pursued the same course of trading on the weaknesses of frail human nature. Despite his youth he was quite conversant with vice and self-indulgent to the last degree. In order to gain some object on which he had set his mind, no cunning was too low for him to stoop to.

Just before Long Vac., as Freddie walked round Cloisters, he was run into by the giant figure of Terry Palmer, who was coming through one of the sombre entries leading from the lawns of New Quad.

Freddie had recently purchased a new eighty horse-power six-cylinder Daimler car, of which he was very proud, and experienced a strong desire to demonstrate its

speed and manifold perfections to someone, no matter who, so long as they would admire. Even Palmer would serve.

Terry Palmer was a jovial youth of great size and bulk, rather older than Freddie, who despised him, as being a nonentity in either the moneyed or snobs' world of who's who. Still, true to his training, he had proffered a helping hand to Palmer at an awkward little moment in the body might h

's career, for even a nobody might h

"Hullo, P:

"Get my h.

"Where do

"Mater's ta

"Pans bung

run you home.

y?" he asked.

home for an hour."

ow at Pangbourne."

well, it's quite close. I'll

machine."

"Good egg, haft a jin.

The proud owner gently placed the gears in neutral, outside Mrs. Palmer's bungalow, well within twenty minutes.

"Jolly good goin'," enthused Terry as he sprang out of the car. "I say, old man, are you in a hurry or anything, or will you wait and take me back?"

"Righto, I'll wait."

"Splendid! I'll go and find the mater."

"That's all right. I want to open the bonnet and cool the engines, and that near tyre seems a bit flat, I'll pump her up," fussed the proud proprietor, as he walked round examining his car.

"When you have finished, stroll through, you'll find the kid sisters on the lawn, or the river. I want to have a talk to the mater, she's a bit bothered. Pater's dead, you see, she has no one to advise her. I'm no more use than a sick headache, but she depends on me, thinks my advice is worth something, and all that rot. Sure you don't mind?"

"Not at all."

"Righto, walk straight through when you've finished."

Terry vanished, leaving Freddie half inside the open bonnet.

After spending a quarter of an hour playing with the perfect piece of machinery, Freddie wiped his oily hands on cotton waste, and glimpsing the garden that could be viewed through the open doors, he stepped inside, and walking through the house, came on to the lilac-scented lawn that sloped down to the river.

Strolling aimlessly towards the water, he became suddenly aware of a small group of three people standing on the bank, three girls. No doubt these were Palmer's kid sisters, of whom he had spoken.

One, a girl of perhaps twelve, had just entered a punt. In her hands she gripped a pole, while she harangued the two figures on the bank. Her sleeves were rolled high above her elbows, and her head, excepting for its mop of short brown curly hair, was bare.

"You'd better come with me then, Miss Meredith, because I'm going. I'm sure mother would not mind," Freddie heard her say.

"I am not coming, Patty," the eldest of the three, the Miss Meredith whom the rebel in the punt had addressed, replied, "and I am sure your mother will be very cross if you do go."

"I'll risk that. Mother's never cross; hop in, June, I'll take you to the Island and back."

June, who appeared some two years older than her little sister, turned to Miss Meredith and shook her head, with its two long plaits of hair, one over either shoulder. "It's no good, Patty will go, I'd better go and steer."

"I do wish you wouldn't, children; if you get drowned I'll be blamed you know."

"You dear little thing, no one could blame you for anything we did," gurgled the wilful Patty, pushing skilfully off into mid-stream. June had seated herself on a cushion in the punt, and picking up a paddle was engaged in steering.

"Do be careful and don't be long," cried Iris Meredith

to her two lovable but obstreperous charges, watching them glide swiftly down stream. Then with a helpless shrug of her shoulders, she turned, and looked full into the eyes of the silent observer.

"Oh!" For a moment she was startled, then as Freddie raised his cap and advanced, "Were you looking for Mrs. Palmer?" she asked.

"No, I ran Terry across in my car; he's with his mother, and to t here and wait for him, Miss Meredith."

The girl flu on of her name, whereat Freddie laughed.

"I heard June ty little Patty call you that," he explained.

"I do hope u ful," her thoughts were on the punt and,

"Neither of them looked as though they were born to be drowned," remarked Freddie, his eyes taking in every line of the dainty little figure, in its plain white linen costume, her beautiful face, fresh as an early morning rose, ripples of honey-coloured hair, the perfectly formed brows and lashes shading deep blue eyes.

Iris Meredith was too pretty to remain a governess, so Freddie cynically decided, as he lounged over to where the garden chairs were placed beneath the shade of a lilac bush.

"May I sit down?" he inquired, sinking into a seat as he spoke.

"Yes, do," she said politely, taking an adjoining chair and picking up a piece of embroidery work, on which she busied herself.

"Beautiful spot this," patronised Freddie.

"Yes, and so peaceful," agreed Iris.

"Are you staying with the Palmers?"

"I am governess to June and Patty," she stated simply.

"How absurd," he laughed.

Her head went up indignantly. "And why absurd?" she inquired.

"From the glimpse I got of those two nippers, they could teach you a jolly sight more than you could teach them," he stated.

"They are only children, I am grown up," with a pretty air of dignity.

"Yes, I should think you were quite seventeen," he jeered smilingly.

"I am twenty."

"Good Lord! what a terrible age."

"You need not laugh, I don't believe you are much older."

"That depends on how you count age." His tone was very patronising, it caused the girl to regard him with a puzzled frown.

Time flew for these young people seated beneath the lilac bush, smiling away the hot summer afternoon, and when Terry appeared, accompanied by his mother, full of apologies for having neglected Freddie, they found him on the best of terms with June and Patty, who had returned from their punting expedition, and Iris Meredith, very pink of cheek, demurely engaged on her needle-work.

On the drive back to Oxford, Freddie was particularly gracious to Palmer, speaking in glowing terms of Mrs. Palmer and the beauty and peace of "Pans Bungalow."

"It's a modest enough little place, but it suits the mater and the kids," explained Palmer.

"You are jolly lucky; home life like yours must be delightful," sighed Freddie.

This was a new phase of Scott's character. The good-natured young giant, turning his head to look at the youth at the wheel, noticed an expression of sadness and longing.

It was not in Terry's nature to dislike actively anyone without good cause, but he had never particularly cared for Scott. Now his impulsive heart reproached him; he tried to remember what oddments of gossip had reached his ears in connection with Freddie.

Something about his people having pots of money and being great society lights. Ah, yes, no doubt the poor chap had been neglected by his parents and left to the care of servants, as Terry had heard was so often the case with rich gay people's children. Poor old Scottie!

"The mater's a wonder, and the kids are all right," he diffidently praised his family.

"Um, does a chap a lot of good to be in that atmosphere," and Freddie slipped the clutch into second and slowed up as they entered the twisty Oxford streets.

"Glad you liked it, might run out there again some day," mumbled Terry.

"I'd like to no end, but Long Vac. is about due, and that means stuffy London or something of the sort for me, while you, you lucky dog, will be soaking in sun on that gorgeous river."

"You'd better come and do some soak with me," impulsively suggested Terry.

"Do you mean it? By Jove, Palmer, that's awfully decent of you. I'd like to no end, if you think your mother wouldn't mind," enthused Freddie.

And thus it was young Schultz, or rather Scott, became a guest at Pans Bungalow, welcomed for her son's sake by Mrs. Palmer, and treated as a member of the small household.

The simple home-life bored Freddie inexpressibly. The grace that was said before and after meals struck him as a huge joke, made him recall his nursery days; the countless petty economies which Mrs. Palmer had been reduced to since the death of her husband he considered bad form. But he had an object in view, and what he thought of the Palmer family was carefully concealed beneath an appearance of calm enjoyment.

At first he was merely coldly polite to the governess, only addressing her when courtesy demanded. She and the girls had their meals with Mrs. Palmer, Terry and Freddie; the bungalow was so tiny that all the members were thrown much together.

The long summer days were spent on the river, or in the garden; it needed very cautious scheming on Freddie's part to get Miss Meredith alone. On the rare occasions when he succeeded, the warmth of his manner was in marked contrast to that which he displayed towards her before the others.

The unsophisticated girl was puzzled.

One hot August evening, Patty the restless had persuaded her mother to entrust herself in the narrow racing punt, while she (Patty) displayed her skill with the pole.

"On condition that Terry comes to fish me out, when you upset us," laughingly agreed Mrs. Palmer, throwing a soft lace scarf over her picturesque white hair.

"And I will follow in the canoe to give first aid," suggested Freddie.

They were very merry as they embarked. "Oh, poor Miss Meredith, aren't you coming?" June cried, suddenly noticing the little figure on the bank.

"Not to-night, June, I have a headache."

"I would be delighted if you would come in the canoe, Miss Meredith," offered Freddie.

"No, thank you, Mr. Scott. Apart from my headache, I have letters to write."

"Are you sure?" questioned Terry.

"Yes, really truly, quite." Very fragile and pretty she looked in her short turquoise blue silk frock, as she waved them good-bye, then entered the bungalow to occupy herself with her correspondence.

The heat was oppressive, she soon abandoned her task. Throwing herself in the hammock Terry had swung on the lawn, she fell into a light doze, from which she was rudely awakened by feeling lips pressed to hers.

With a start she struggled to her feet, her first thought being that Patty was playing one of her jokes. She expected to hear the child's voice ring out, instead of which she heard Freddie's voice:

"At last I have got rid of the Palmer crowd, and we can have a few minutes alone," he said.

"Mr. Scott, what on earth do you mean?" Iris was still feeling a little dazed from her nap, and the sudden awakening.

"That I've dodged the family, in order to be with you, my dear."

"Oh, but you shouldn't have, and—and I don't think you should call me—speak like that."

"Why shouldn't I? Come along and sit down here, and let us talk." He took her hand in his and endeavoured to pull her to where the garden chairs were lying.

"No, no, I think I will go inside and finish my letters," she protested, trying to wriggle her hand free of his grasp.

"The letters can wait, I can't, it is time I got some reward for my faithfulness."

"I do not understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do, little Miss Demure, you jolly well know that it was only to be near you I came to stay in this deadly hole."

"I—I thought you liked the quiet, I heard you telling Mrs. Palmer you were very happy here."

"Of course I did, what else could I say? I'm bored stiff with these middle-class nobodies. I tell you it's only you I'm stopping for, it was only you that brought me here."

"Then you had better go away as soon as you can," she retorted indignantly.

"If you are not kinder to me I will," he threatened, "then you'll be jolly sorry, my dear. Come, be a kind little girl, and be nice to me," he coaxed.

"I think you must be mad, Mr. Scott. I insist on your letting me go."

"Oh, rot, you don't really mean that, you can't fool me, you know. I understand girls, they always try the standoffish pose to lead men on."

"Believe me, in this instance, you are mistaken."

The cold frigidity of her tone was convincing. Freddie, with all the conceit gained in his short young life from the successes which had attended his amours (if the affairs in which he had indulged could be dignified by such a term), felt this; he changed his tactics.

"I am sorry," he dropped her hand, "you are right. Please" (as she made a move towards the bungalow) "wait one moment; be generous and listen to me, don't go until you have said you forgive me."

"Yes, we will forget all about this."

"That will be easy for you," Freddie managed a bitter little laugh; "you are not in love and I am, that makes all the difference."

"Ah, I am so sorry." Little Miss Meredith felt anger give place to pity in her heart.

"Then if you're really sorry, show it by stopping and talking to me; it can't do you any harm and may help me. Will you?"

"Yes, of course."

"Thank you." And now she allowed him to lead her to the chairs where they had first sat some weeks ago, beneath the lilac bush.

"I am mad about you, Iris," he began directly they were seated; "couldn't you ever care for me?"

"I'm sorry," was all she could find to repeat.

"You say that, but you aren't really."

"Yes, indeed I am; I hadn't the least idea of how you were feeling towards me."

"Well, you know now, and you are not going to be cruel, are you?"

"I—I—please won't you stop talking like that, it distresses me."

"That's the way with women, they're so jolly selfish; lead a chap on until he's crazy about them, then say they are sorry."

"I never led you on, Mr. Scott."

"Oh, yes, you did, with your big eyes, and your baby

ways, and laughing and singing and pretending not to take any notice of me. I tell you, my dear girl, I know women; I see through their little games."

"Really, Mr. Scott, I must go inside now." Iris stood up.

"No, no, not yet." Freddie barred her way. "Listen, Iris, you are too pretty to be a governess. Now I could give you no end of a good time, I've got plenty of money, you know; you could have a little place of your own and do as you like."

"But I don't love you." Iris was terribly distressed, she hated to give pain.

"You would in time."

"I couldn't marry anyone unless I loved them," she explained pathetically.

"Marry! good Lord, marry! As to that, well, there'd be no need to marry me; I wasn't suggesting that, you know."

"What did you mean then?"

"Just be a nice little girl, and I swear you'll never regret it. I'll be jolly good to you, I swear I will; you and I will be corking good friends. I've got no time for prudes, I like a sporting girl," he explained.

"You mean fast girls, I suppose," gasped Iris; only her enraged attempt to be cutting induced her to even mention such a word.

"You're right the very first time," he laughed. "And now that we understand each other, give me a kiss to seal our bargain. I knew you'd come round all right; all you girls who work for a living are the same. I don't blame you, by Jove; be the same myself if I was a girl."

"You cad, you despicable cad," panted little Miss Meredith, and as he bent his head to kiss her, her hand resounded from the force with which she struck his cheek.

"You little hell-cat," he snarled, "you'll pay for that, my dear. It's no use struggling, I'll teach you."

"Oh, will you indeed?" It was Terry's voice, which,

low and tense, caused Freddie to set Iris free and swing round to find the giant at his elbow.

In the excitement of the moment, neither of the two beneath the lilac bush had noticed the arrival of the punt, nor heard the Palmer family as they landed.

For a moment Terry stood and looked at them—the sobbing, trembling little governess, her pretty hair all dishevelled from the struggle falling about her shoulders, adding to her childish appearance—to her tormentor who stood with lowered lids, his lips twisted in a cynical grin.

In the clear moonlight both men's faces showed white.

"I am sorry, Miss Meredith." Terry's tone was exceedingly gentle. "I cannot sufficiently express my regret for having subjected you to the insults of such a blackguard. Will you go inside; I will explain to my mother later."

When Iris had disappeared into the bungalow, young Palmer turned to his guest.

"You lecherous toad," he said, "you unclean animal, put up your hands, for I warn you, you are going to get the father of a licking."

"Oh, come off it, Palmer. I admit evidence is against me, but you only heard the end of the affair, where I'll own I lost my wool, but she had been leading me on and playing no end of a game, the little baggage."

"And for that you'll not only get the father and the grandfather of a hiding, but you'll take a midnight swim as well," promised Terry with ominous quiet.

Late that night a very wet and bedraggled Freddie struggled out of the river and slunk down side streets to the garage, where his car was standing.

Aching in every limb, his features distorted, his body shivering from the ducking, which true to his promise Terry had given him, after the very thorough thrashing had been administered, Freddie, miserable and raging, cranked up, and drove furiously to London, ignoring the amenities which common politeness usually demands of bidding one's hostess a farewell before departing.

## CHAPTER XIX

AT Marigold's earnest request her mother accompanied her to Paris, where Dickie, now Major Hillrose, had come, partly on affairs of State, over which he was aggravatingly secretive, so his wife informed him, and partly because his uncle, Pelham Saintleigh, Earl of Sandham, of whom Dickie was very fond, had written urging his nephew and Marigold to spend Christmas with him and his daughter Joan. His son, young Benjamin, having obtained leave from H.M.S. *Capella*, had rushed over to Marseilles to meet his father and sister on their return from a tour in the far East, whither they had journeyed after the death of Lady Sandham, and escort them to Paris.

Unable to tear herself away from her own three children, Kiss, Ruth and baby John, for Christmas, Marigold and Dickie, accompanied by Lady Mary, crossed in time to spend New Year with Earl Pelham and his high-spirited good-looking son and daughter.

"Thank the Fates you have come, Mary; you must help me restrain these two irrepressibles of mine," laughingly Lord Sandham greeted Lady Mary.

"My dear Pelham, they will not listen to me," she replied in the same vein.

"Aunt Mary will aid and abet us," chortled Joan, embracing the arm of the older woman, whom from babyhood she had always addressed thus.

"It's good to hear him talk like that," jeered Benjamin. "I give you my word, Aunt Mary, the dad would be in all sorts of mix-ups if it wasn't for my restraining influence."

"Poor old Ben, I will help you keep your unruly family in order," sympathised Dickie.

"I believe I am the only truly sober member of the party," sighed Marigold.

So, joking and laughing, they drove to the Hôtel Crillon in the Place de la Concorde, a very happy family.

Lady Mary felt care falling from her shoulders. The gay atmosphere of Paris was not to be withstood. She determined to forget for a few short days that such people as Wellrock and her son existed, for her husband, she believed, had gone to Ireland—some wonderful scheme for procuring electricity from sea water was interesting him at the moment; an experiment was being made on the West coast of Erin's Isle. She did not know where Freddie was; he was not in the habit of confiding his movements to anyone, least of all to his mother.

On the eve of the thirty-first of December, nineteen hundred and thirteen, Joan and Benjamin were in uproarious spirits. Their youthful gaiety infected the older members of the party; Dickie especially was very merry, inciting the youngsters to all sorts of mad pranks.

They had dined at Larue's before going to the popular Revue at the Folies Bergères. At the close of the performance, Dickie appeared shocked at Benjamin's suggestion of supper at the Café de Paris.

"It is New Year's Eve," pleaded Joan; "do let us go and watch the fun."

"We couldn't get a table for love or money at this hour," protested Lord Sandham.

"We might try," suggested the wily Dickie, who the day before had visited the famous café with his fellow-conspirator, Midshipman Benjamin, and cajoled Louis, the popular major-domo, into assigning to them an already long-booked table, the best in the restaurant.

On entering the long narrow room, the party was greeted with cheers and cries of "*Vivent les Anglais*," accompanied by a shower of confetti, from the light-hearted merry-makers.

Lord Sandham piloted the amused Lady Mary to the table Louis pointed out as theirs. Dickie, while looking

after Marigold, kept a tight hold on Joan's arm, in order to prevent her dancing off with Benny, whose whispered suggestion to his sister Major Hillrose had caught.

"No, you don't, you young scoundrel; this is no place for your sister to dance," he warned.

"Go on, you old spoil sport," protested Benny; "or I'll give it away that it was you, not I, who wanted to come here to-night."

Benny spoke loudly; the whole party heard, and Dickie was unmercifully teased as they seated themselves for supper.

Lady Mary was feeling wonderfully happy. It was all very frivolous and silly of course, but the complete change from years of tragedy and depression was acting as some miraculous tonic might have done: for the moment it gave her back her youth and lightness of heart. She joined in the hearty laughter that greeted Bennie's and Dickie's attempts to pronounce the chorus of the French popular song, and was watching the wild grace of an actress who had consented to dance, vaguely wondering where she had seen the dark beauty before, when with a sudden shock she recognised her son.

Freddie was sitting far up the room. The reason she had not seen him before was because the table at which she sat was screened by a pillar banked round with flowers: now he was leaning forward watching the wonderful gyrations of the dancer. He seemed enraptured with her, oblivious to everything and everyone else as his eyes followed her every movement. He had evidently been dining exceedingly well, too well, as her experienced eye noted. His deathly pallor, close-drawn lips and almost closed eyes were signs she well knew; although no casual observer would have recognised the fact, she knew that he had been drinking.

With a sudden wrench of memory she recollects that this was Freddie's birthday. Just twenty-two years ago to-night she had given birth to this pale youth who was no more than a stranger to her.

The dance ended amidst uproarious applause. Freddie disappeared again from view; Lady Mary noticed it was to her son's table the dancer vanished. All her enjoyment died, her thoughts raced in a strange manner, and she sighed.

"What is the matter, Aunt Mary?" questioned Joan, "you look unhappy; what are you thinking about?"

"I—I was feeling sorry for the late Empress Frederick I think," laughed Lady Mary.

"Who? Our Princess Victoria do you mean?" queried Lord Sandham.

"Yes, poor thing." Lady Mary sighed again.

"What a funny thing to think about just now," Joan smiled.

"I suppose it was," agreed Lady Mary. She could not say what really was in her heart: a great sympathy and fellow-feeling for the English Princess who, married to a German, had given birth to a son and been treated abominably by both husband and child.

The fun grew fast and furious, many of the guests were dancing. Marigold was suggesting it was time to depart when she suddenly paused, her eyes grew large and round. "Freddie," she ejaculated.

There indeed was Freddie dancing with great abandon, his partner, the actress who had just roused the restaurant to a pitch of enthusiasm by her beautiful wild whirling.

"*A Cléo, la belle Cléo,*" cried her many admirers.

Suddenly Lady Mary remembered where she had seen this gipsy face and lithe figure. Years ago this woman had forced an entry into her house; this was the person who had worn a facsimile of her own gown and jewels, and with wonderful daring had actually addressed a few words to her unwilling hostess. And now she was in Freddie's arms!

Lady Mary studied the graceful swaying form—how wonderful these women were! Cleo did not look a day over twenty-four, if that, her figure was as slim and

supple as it had been on that night fourteen years ago, her face showed no wrinkles, her hair retained its raven blackness; if art had been employed, it was with such skill that even an expert in such matters would have been deceived.

How came it that Freddie knew her? What was he doing here, or for the matter of that why was he in Paris at all?

"By gad, so it is Freddie, the young rip," remarked Major Hillrose, following the direction of Marigold's eyes.

"Oooh, wicked Freddie," gurgled Joan, with the tone and look of an impish child, trying to be properly shocked, but secretly delighted at a playfellow's misbehaviour.

"Is that your son, Mary? by Jove, I wouldn't have recognised him; it is years since I saw the young beggar," Lord Sandham commented easily. He was regretting having acceded to his children's hare-brained request to come to this popular café on a fête night; something of this sort was sure to occur he was telling himself, he would get his party quietly away before things became too hilarious.

Just at this juncture an incident happened, which, though momentary, was to recur in after years to the minds of some of the observers with striking significance.

A joyous Frenchman to amuse his party had designed a head from an orange, shredded wax match ends had been used for moustaches, eyebrows and hair, cleverly constructed slits formed mouth, nose and eyes, a cap of coloured paper topped all, the whole represented quite a recognisable image of the German Kaiser.

Shrieks of delighted laughter greeted the artist's work, which someone grabbed and prodding on to a stick lifted high in the middle of the restaurant for everyone to see.

A howl of applause flattered the originator, followed

by hisses and groans, and the orange head was assailed by deftly-thrown nuts, sweets, and toys from crackers.

Suddenly a figure sprang forward and striding up the restaurant, snatched stick and orange from the hand of the man who was holding it. Removing the fruit, the rescuer brushed off the match hair and paper cap, tossing the despoiled orange into a jardinière, then snapping the stick in twain and dropping it on the floor, Freddie returned to his seat, for Freddie it was who had saved this impersonation of the German Emperor from ridicule and violation.

"*C'est un Allemand,*" cried a voice.

Then cries of "*A bas les Allemands,*" and "*Non, non, chacun pour son pays,*" rang out and the episode passed.

"Jolly sporting of Freddie," praised Benjamin.

"Yes, wasn't it perfectly splendid of him," agreed Joan enthusiastically.

Just then, as Lord Sandham had arranged with Dickie to make a move, the dancers once more crowded the narrow floor.

Cleo broke away from her partner (Freddie again), preferring to dance alone, and Freddie suddenly recognised his mother and her party. For a moment he seemed dubious whether to pretend ignorance of their presence or to put a bold face on the matter and greet them naturally.

Marigold settled his decision.

"Freddie, what on earth are you doing here?" she called to him in playful reprimand.

"I might ask you the same question," he retorted, then he greeted the members of his mother's party with an uneasy eye on his late partner, who, all unconscious of her escort's doings or feelings, continued to float in graceful abandon unattended.

"We are seeing life," bragged Joan.

"So am I," stated Freddie, and as he looked at the pretty face flushed with excitement of the Honourable

Joan Saintleigh, a look of admiration crept into his narrow eyes.

"Yes, but you are a little boy and should not be here alone," teased Joan.

"I am twenty-two to-day," boasted Freddie, "and to the best of my belief you aren't anywhere near twenty yet, Joan."

"I'll be twenty in May," protested Joan.

Then everyone wished Freddie many happy returns of his birthday, and a place was made for him at the table.

"Sorry we did not see you earlier, Freddie," commented Lord Sandham, "we are just going."

"Not yet, Daddie, please not yet," begged Joan, and Bennie joined in his sister's request.

"Mother and I are very tired, we must go," Marigold was explaining, when, with no previous warning beyond the noise which had been steadily increasing in volume as midnight hour approached, the lights were suddenly switched off.

Bells rang out, shrieks of laughter, snatches of songs, in which "Auld Lang Syne" could easily be distinguished, and muffled cries were heard, as the clocks solemnly boomed out the passing of the Old Year, and the birth of the New.

As suddenly as they had been extinguished, the lights were turned on again, flooding the restaurant with a brilliant light.

Joan's hair was distinctly dishevelled, her face flushed, she wore a very self-conscious look, as she bit her lip, and eyed Freddie reproachfully, for he had taken advantage of the momentary darkness to kiss her.

Everyone was wishing everyone else a happy New Year, when a plaintive voice joined in, "Freddie, what do you mean, Freddie, to leave me all alone, ah, you bad boy?" and there in their midst stood the smiling whimsical Cleo.

Joan and Bennie were the only two members of the party who thoroughly enjoyed this contretemps. Fred-

die took the interloper's arm, and attempted to draw her away.

Lord Sandham and Major Hillrose with Lady Mary and Marigold appeared oblivious of the actress's nearness, they stood up and, all speaking at once, moved towards the door, carrying the two Saintleighs with them.

Cleo was not in the least embarrassed, she resisted Freddie's efforts to take her away, her large black eyes dancing with devilment, as they eyed the party of English people, and fell on Joan's flower-like face.

"Ah, I see, you find someone you like better than me, someone younger, prettier, eh?"

Then there happened in Joan's life an event over which she often thrilled in innocent impish delight—one of those women, a wicked dancing French actress, actually spoke to her. "You must not believe this wicked boy, Ma'mselle," said Cleo, "'e tell you 'e love you, and 'e tell me 'e love me, and 'e tell so so many girls the same, 'e is a bad one this Freddie, la, la, I me, Cleo tell you so, and if Cleo say it, you can know it is true, for I know mans like the inside of this palm." She held up a tiny claw-like hand.

"Shut up, Cleo, and come along," growled Freddie.

She was blocking the egress of Lord Sandham and his party, there was no possibility of their leaving the room, unless Cleo moved, and this she did not seem in the least inclined to do.

The slight push with which Freddie accompanied his admonition, roused the always simmering spirit of mischief in the woman.

"Why you do that, eh, Freddie?" she flashed; "you think I am not good enough to talk with your people, eh? Me, I knew 'er Ladyship, I go to 'er place, *n'est-ce pas*, Madame? I visit at your 'ouse, me I come like a fren', when that cabbage'-ead, that Féadora, she come for money what you pay 'er to dance, that was funny, yairs?" she drawled, throwing back her head and laugh-

ing. "She could keel me for it, that one, but I 'ave my revenge, yairs."

"A happy New Year, Ma'mselle, and now may we pass, please." It was Lady Mary who had come to the rescue of the perplexed party, with a gentle smile, and kindly speech.

The devilment died out of Cleo's face, her head sank on her chest, with an abrupt movement she moved away, and the party of six passed out of the restaurant, leaving Freddie behind.

The next morning, between eleven and twelve o'clock, Lady Mary was informed that a lady had called; someone who refused to give a name, but insisted on seeing her.

"Send her up," ordered her Ladyship, who was writing letters before setting out to join the others at lunch in the boulevards, where a rendezvous had been arranged.

She was not curious as to the identity of her visitor—some little modiste, or tout for a dressmaker, she idly speculated—so many of the poor things called.

When her visitor, in a chic plain tailored costume and heavy veil, proved to be Cleo, Lady Mary was neither startled nor seriously disturbed, she frowned slightly.

If this young person thought, because she had been spoken kindly to last night, she was to be received on terms of friendship in the future, she must be quickly undeceived, that was all, and if Freddie had been indiscreet that would be awkward, but not an insurmountable trouble.

"You wished to see me?" Lady Mary's voice was cold but courteous.

"It was a great kindness of you to see me, Madame." Cleo's tone was humble, none of the merry abandon of last night was evident, and as she threw back her veil her face appeared pale, with great dark circles round her expressive eyes.

"I come to tell you I regret, I am sorry, yairs."

"But why trouble to call, Ma'mselle?"

"Ah, I know what you think, and it is so, you think, if she is truly sorry, this cheeky one, why she come to bother me some more, yairs, you think that?"

"Something of the sort," admitted Lady Mary frankly.

"I will tell you. I come, me, at this so abominable hour, when no one will think it is me, Cleo, who do not go out of bed at this terrible time, only when I must go to make my confession like a good Cat'olic, to the Holy Father. I put me on this so ugly veil to hide up my faces, and I come to tell you I am a wicked bad womans, ah, you know that without me to tell you, but I tell you more, I am sorry with a great sadness that I come to your 'ouse to make my revenge on that stupid animal Féadora, to—'ow you call it, put in my spokes, yairs? and speak with you in public restaurants, that was a thing unforgivable, me I know it very well, it was a terrible, terrible thing. I do not sleep all night, I cry, *Mon Dieu*, 'ow I cry, see my face 'e is all pale, and my eyes like of a ghos', look at me, is it not so?" Cleo paused dramatically, with her face upheld to the cold frosty glare of a January morning.

"I am sorry you have let it upset you so, we will forget the incident," promised Lady Mary gently, pity of the ghastly white face, and pained eyes, stirring her heart.

"You think I do not know 'ow you feel, but I do, it is bad of me, Cleo, the wicked one to talk with you, some devil inside me makes me do it, and good women like you do not like that," Cleo swayed slightly.

"Sit down, Ma'mselle."

"*Merci!*" She was not acting, this temperamental flotsam, who claimed no one knew what country for her birthplace; it was bare truth she was telling when she described the restless hours she had spent since midnight, and for the moment she felt really faint.

"You have spoken so frankly about yourself, that I will try to explain how I feel, Ma'mselle."

"I know you despise me," interrupted Cleo.

"Not more than you despise me."

"Oh, Madame." The astounding reply had brought Cleo to an upright position, her faintness quite forgotten.

"It is so, otherwise you would be as I am, and if I did not despise your life, I would be as you; some of us are willing to take on the duties of wife and motherhood, that would not please you?"

"*Mon Dieu, no, jamais de la vie,* what would I do with a 'usband and some babies, it would keel me."

"Just so, and your life would kill me. We wives and mothers do not despise women like you, we fear you, we do not receive you, in order that we may protect our men, keep them our own. You said last night you knew men like the palm of your hand, then you know that most men, the best men, always retain something of the child in their composition, caught by a new toy, liking to be amused—"

"That is so, mans is a big baby," agreed Cleo.

"A man will love and reverence the woman he marries, he will make her his partner. If she is a worthy mate she will respond by trying to do her best for him, she will bear him children, advise him to the best of her ability, and if need be economise for him. Her duties will age her, she will not feel like dancing and singing and giving whole-souled attention to her looks, her dress, her hair, her complexion, or light accomplishments. In a moment of bored domesticity the man meets a woman like yourself, you are a contrast, it is your *métier* to please, to be gay, to look well, and what do you care if the man ruins himself morally and financially, a good time is all you want—"

"We pay, we pay, Madame, is it you think they give us that good time, those suppers, dinners, jewels, for nothing? *ma foi, no.*"

"Certainly you pay, but so do we, and God knows

which of we women get the best out of life. We have our children, and perhaps a man to provide for us in our old age, the respect of our fellows, the calm happiness of home life, while you are sought after, feted, made much of in your youth, and cast aside when age appears. I could not live your life, you could not tolerate mine; to change places would be death to both of us. We must put up the bar against you butterflies; our feeling for one another is mutual, we pity and despise each other. There, I have tried to explain, I hope I have not hurt you, Ma'mselle."

"Ah, but no, I understan', it is all so true, so true. I pray to the Virgin Mary to 'elp and pity us womans; sometime I think it seem like the good God 'e do not like us *du tout*," Cleo sighed wearily, then banishing her troubles with a slow shrugging of her shoulders—"Alors you 'ave been very good and charmin' to me, Madame, I would like to say something to you about—your son."

"What of him?" Try as she would, the note of hardness crept into her voice.

Cleo regarded her with a quick puzzled scrutiny, her ear had caught the changed tone, she did not understand it.

"'E is very young, 'e is only twenty-two in 'is year, but 'e is much older than any boy of twenty-two, or thirty-two, 'e is clevaire, oh, very clevaire, but 'e will one day get into big trouble if 'e is not careful."

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, that is difficult to explain, Madame. I would regret that you should ever suffer, I will speak with Freddie. *Au revoir*, and I am 'appier I 'ave your pardon, yairs?"

Lady Mary was very thoughtful when she was once more alone. She told no one of the actress's visit, nor did she see or hear of Cleo again while she was in Paris.

## CHAPTER XX

**M**Y dear Wellrock, you are crazy." Sir Babcock Roofe expressed his sentiments with his habitual bluntness. "This using electricity from the sea is all bosh, I wonder at a hard-headed chap like you listening to such an irresponsible dreamer as that fellow Athol."

"You may be right, Roofe, but how can we tell, until we have tried the thing, whether there is anything in his idea or not?" argued Lord Wellrock.

"Well, I'd rather it was your money than mine that gave it its trial. Athol's honest enough, but he's mad, and why in heaven's name go to Ireland to test the fool thing?"

"Athol fancies the west coast of Ireland, says he can erect his dynamos and so forth without too much red tape. I need a holiday, and while he is playing about with the plant, I can get some fishing."

"That's true," and Sir Babcock started off on a train of reminiscences relative to thrilling fishing exploits of his own.

The little coastal village of Glenalla was inhabited by none but the simplest and most ignorant peasants in Ireland.

The excitement over the arrival of "foreign gentry" from England in "moty-cars" was intense in conservative little Glenalla, where anyone who did not belong to the immediate vicinity was looked on with suspicion and termed "foreign."

By some mistake (so Wellrock explained later to James Athol) his lordship arrived a few days early in the village. He was accompanied by two square-headed individuals, who left all arrangements for housing and

food to be made by the banker; in fact, neither Hans Sachs nor Ernst Humboldt spoke much to the natives during their sojourn in Glenalla; when they did converse it was generally to one another and in a strange language. They were very busy examining the immediate coast and testing the gravity of the soil; they tramped many miles a day, and speculation as to their business occupied the minds and tongues of the villagers to the exclusion of every other topic.

"It'll be a tunnel they're after buildin' under the say, from here to Ameriky," stated one, O'Rafferty, who kept the village stores and sold everything from coffins to pigs, for every form of payment, from fish to stolen cattle.

"Go on wid ye now," contradicted Kerrigan, famous in that he was an "indipindint gintleman," a man of substance and wealth, for his son in America sent him fifty pounds a year, paid quarterly, so Dooley Kerrigan's words bore the weight of a plutocrat behind them. "It's no tunnel they'll be makin', it's one o' thim caysaynos, loike they have at Monte Carlo, where ye can make and lose a fortune iviry blessid minute av the twinty-four hours. The govimint, bad scran to 'em, won't be afther allowin' gamblin', so these gintlemen 'll be desavin' the bullies, and oppressors of freedom and roight, by building a caysayno foive moiles beyant and apart from the adjacent and near-boy land, and there in pace and harmony they can sit and shmoke their ceegars and defoy the dirthy govimint."

Ah, if these "foreigners" from England were defying the Government, all was well. A feeling of friendliness sprang up in the hearts of the Glenallaites towards the new comers.

"How'd ye be afther foindin' out about the caysayno, Kerrigan?" inquired a wondering native.

"Boy gettin' into conversation wid his honour, the one wid the money. Ses oi to him, ses oi, 'It'll be a grand shpot for a caysayno,' ses oi. 'A what?' ses he,

and oi, percaivin' he was onaisy at my sagaciousness, tipped him a friendly wink wid me oi. 'Be aisy now,' ses oi, 'be aisy, it's no one here in Glenalla 'll be afther bein' an inimy to an inimy of the dirthy govimint,' ses oi, 'and if ye want the buildin' of yer caysayno kept a sacret, ye've come to the roight and praycoise shpot,' ses oi, 'for we're all agin the govimint here,' ses oi, with which he lets out a laugh from him and saymed relayved loike."

"And well he moight be," agreed O'Rafferty. "Is it traitores we are to be sendin' wurred to the black villains who kape us crushed to the airth in stricken poverty, whoile they do be livin' on the fat of the land?" This was declaimed in great style. "And sure it's foine and ginrous his honour do be," he added of Wellrock as an afterthought.

Other suggestions were mooted, such as a bridge being contemplated in order to run trains from Glenalla to —, various places were suggested, Australia, London, Canada, all had their moment, but the casino idea proved the most popular; it lived while the other inspirations died.

It was a matter of indifference to Wellrock and the silent Sachs and Humboldt what the natives thought, still the banker tacitly encouraged the casino idea.

"You have decided on the exact spot?" Wellrock questioned Humboldt, who seemed the leader of the two squareheaded men.

"Yes, here." Humboldt indicated a portion of the coastline by a wave of his hand.

"Then waste no time, get to work at once, use as many of the natives as you can, get the job done as quickly and as thoroughly as it can be accomplished. Remember that after to-day we are strangers. I know nothing about you or your work, beyond peasants' gossip; the natives are to believe that you two and Athol are occupied on the same task, and as all supplies will come directed to Athol, you'll need to keep a sharp look out

for the goods as they arrive. The Port authorities recognise Athol in any operations that take place here; his crazy electricity from sea water idea has its uses, for under its cloak we can proceed without awkward questions. Engage that drunken ruffian Kerrigan in some capacity. He has a grudge against anything that savours of authority, especially English authority, even more than his fellow countrymen, for, I learn, his scapegrace son had to fly from the country on account of some moonlighting affair, in which young Kerrigan became a murderer. The old ruffian resents the law that would make his son pay for his misdeeds were he to return here. Kerrigan will be useful to us when the time comes; it may be months, it may be years, but it will come."

"The sooner the better," added Humboldt fervently.

The plotters had little to fear from James Athol, who was a dreamer and visionary rather than an inventor, and who was greatly gratified when the clever City man, with a reputation for hard-headedness, had shown a keen interest in his vague premises, that given certain installations, he could extract a useful amount of electricity from the waves of the sea.

Now with conductors, batteries and a dynamo, Athol pottered happily about, followed with a consuming curiosity by half the bare-legged ragged gossoons and colleens in the place. One small maiden, "Irish Kathleen," as the workmen dubbed her, with her baby brother continually carried astride her hip, led the gang.

Lord Wellrock motored about the country-side and tried a little fishing. Ostensibly for this purpose he purchased an open boat, a solidly-built thirty-foot affair, which provoked much admiration in Glenalla; but its glory faded into insignificance alongside the smart electric launch which the nobleman bought in Dublin.

Both these ships, by the way, were left in Glenalla bay, in Mr. Kerrigan's charge, to be used by him, if he felt so inclined, when their owner took his departure.

In the meantime Messrs. Humboldt and Sachs were

busily occupied in superintending a curiously constructed tunnel that jutted from a well-concealed cave on the coast; scores of workmen labored diligently with tools and materials that came addressed to Mr. James Athol, but of which the addressee remained in complete ignorance.

Countless barrels arrived and were quickly stored away in the cave; the gossiping peasants surmised that these contained dynamite for blasting purposes, but there was nothing so explosively dangerous, the barrels were merely filled with crude oil.

While the building of the tunnel proceeded apace, Mr. Athol interested himself with his dynamos and Lord Wellrock's money. This latter fact distressed the fallacious inventor.

"It does not seem to pan out as well as I hoped," he confided to his patron, "but I fancy I see what is wrong, only it is costing such a deuce of a lot."

"Nonsense, my dear Athol, nothing worth while has ever been achieved without experiments and failures; you go ahead and have another try," advised Lord Wellrock.

This generous liberality almost moved James Athol to tears.

In the meantime another experiment of which the dreamer knew nothing was almost ready to be tested.

In the far end of the tunnel was a huge square crate affair, composed of steel mesh, and fitted with a clumsy door which closed with spring hinges.

"Sure now, yer honour, is it that ye're afther goin' to kape say chickens in yer chuckie pen?" questioned scarlet-haired Kathleen O'Connor of Humboldt on the day the contraption was being hoisted out to sea.

Humboldt glared down at the wide-eyed ragged mite of twelve. He hated all children and this persistently curious specimen in particular. He saw no beauty in the piquant freckled face, nor did he feel any inclination to pet the shock-headed omnipresent babe Kathleen carried cross-legged on her side.

"Get out of here, or I'll throw you and that dirty brat into the sea for the fishes to eat," he threatened.

"It's a loir ye are, and so oi do be tellin' ye," screamed Irish Kathleen, her face inflamed with rage at the discourtesy with which her gentle question had been treated and at the insult cast on her beloved charge. "Ye'll no throw us into the say, and Micky's as clane as yerself, ye dirthy devil you, an' whin me brudder Patsy do be comin' back he'll be afther breakin' ye're bleedin' neck for yer, so he will now." Long after Humboldt had contemptuously passed out of earshot, Kathleen continued to pour invectives after him.

"Sure he's a baste," she cooed to the tranquil Micky, as she placed him carefully on the turf, and seating herself beside the idol of her heart, rubbed his far from clean nose with a rag of her abbreviated skirt in a vain attempt to cleanse that snub member. "Don't ye be mindin' him, darlin', and whin ye're big brudder Patsy do be sailin' home wid gowld chains for ye're mither, an' porther for ye're father, an' silk an' satin an' kerries fer me an' you, he'll t'row that ugly blaygard into the say and drownd him, so he will, oim tellin' ye, wid the help of the Blessed Mary and her Holy Saints," she ended piously.

Micky babbled contentedly and reinserted a grimy thumb into a drooling mouth. Insults meant nothing to him, but his fiery sister never forgave the square-headed Humboldt or his associates.

Eventually a very disappointed Athol was forced to admit complete failure of his wonderful invention. He remained ever grateful to Lord Wellrock for his philosophical reception of the woeful tidings.

"Can't manage it, eh, Athol? Well, well, there is something noble in failure, for it shows attempt," was the way the banker greeted the confession. "You had better come back with me, there's nothing to keep us hanging about here any longer," he added.

"It isn't these months of work, or even the failure I

feel so keenly, it's the waste of your money that worries me," groaned Athol.

Wellrock laughed easily as he consoled the would-be inventor. Athol had unconsciously served his purpose. The few hundred pounds his dynamos and paraphernalia had cost had been money well expended, for Athol's rubbish had been counted as wrappings to disguise the importation of other things, such as material for this tunnel, oil, copper wire, and curious delicate instruments resembling those used on ships to convey wireless messages.

During the period of construction, Wellrock had come back and forth from London. Now when Athol told him the ultimate result of his efforts, Humboldt also had news for him. It was to the effect that the tunnel, with its wire basket attached, was finished and ready to be tried.

That night when the *élite* of Glenalla was regaling itself on "lashin's of porther" and other luxuries provided by Lord Wellrock's generosity, the banker, accompanied by Humboldt, Sachs and two other trusties, tested the efficiency of the carefully constructed work. A barrel of oil was passed through the tunnel and came safely out into the wire basket, where it lay rolling lazily about just below the water.

This rapidly executed piece of work seemed likely to prove of inestimable value.

For instance, if ever ships' crews required oil, petrol, or provisions of any sort, without caring to come ashore, and were lucky enough to know of this retired corner; if some kind knowledgeable person was at hand to receive messages which could be submitted by signals or wireless, then the needy merchants could be supplied with a pleasing absence of publicity.

On his return to London, Mr. Athol, in and out of season, sang praises of the great man who believed in encouraging people with ideas, even to the extent of sacrificing valuable time and his own money.

James Athol became an enthusiast in his eulogistic expressions of admiration and gratitude. Echoes of this laudation drifting to Wellrock's ears caused a contemptuous smile. That gentleman was busier than ever, every sign pointed to a near approach of the day. In his capacity as banker he was collecting gold in colossal quantities; he proved a past master in the art of juggling with finance. In his endeavours to gather gold, millions of pounds' worth of yellow metal was shipped out of the country.

His manipulation of bills of exchange was so artfully contrived that he seriously attended a secret meeting of principal bankers, and seconded a vote of censure that was proposed against some person or persons unknown who had almost precipitated a financial crisis, with never a twinge of fear that his manœuvres might have been detected.

On his return from his meeting, late as it was, Lord Wellrock found his secretary awaiting him.

"I thought you would have gone, Trent," he remarked.  
"I waited to see if you required anything, I didn't mind, I was reading an article on the proposed widening of the Kiel Canal."

"Indeed, very interesting."

"So I thought; it has been decided to accomplish the work this July."

"Really, where did you get your information?"

"In a newspaper article, by a man who has just returned from Germany. He also says that the German Government is taking steps to have the whole of the enormous war tax of a milliard marks, £50,000,000, paid in full by the first of July. Wonderful, isn't it, sir?"

"A goodish sum, if it is true."

"The writer seems to know what he is talking about; it is a sort of warning article bidding us beware that Germany is out to conquer by force the economic hegemony of the world, that she already practically controls

the metal market, that we are dependent on her now for our supplies of aluminium, spelter, copper, tin and lead. He points out how awkward it would be if we went to war against Germany; why, we would have to ask them to let us have the raw materials to make guns and munitions of war to kill them with."

"The idea is too absurd, Trent."

"As you say, sir, it is absurd. A war with Germany will never come, not in our time at any rate, such a thing is economically and humanly impossible; but it does seem funny the way they're hustling up army and navy matters for July. This writer chap seems to have got a bit nervy over the activities of the Pan-German League, the Army and the Navy League, and other such like societies in Germany; he certainly has got a mass of information together."

"'Information' seems to be the wrong word, I should substitute 'sensationalisms.'"

"I am glad to hear you say that, sir." The honest Trent was genuinely relieved at his employer's scorn of the article which had disturbed him.

"The thing is absurd," and so his Lordship dismissed the matter. "I just returned for a paper, there is no need for you to wait, Trent."

"Thank you, sir. May I take this opportunity of once more expressing our gratitude, my wife's and mine, for your kindness in taking our second boy into the bank."

"That is all right, he seems a likely lad; both the boys seem smart."

"They've got their wits about them," smiled the proud father. "Ronald is the quicker of the two, but he lacks Paul's balance. Still, five years makes a difference, twenty is very young, and when he reaches his brother's years he may attain his discretion as well."

"I hope so. Good-night, Trent."

"Good-night, sir." Mr. Trent went on his cheery way, the disturbing article quite forgotten.

Lord Wellrock waited to collect the paper of which

he had come in search, then entering his waiting car he drove to his club in Carlton Place. After dismissing his chauffeur he ran down the wide steps at the foot of the Duke of York's column and entered a little side door to the right, which rapidly opened to his peculiar knock, and as rapidly closed on his entry. Mounting a few steps, his Lordship, who seemed perfectly at home here, turned to the right, a few more well-carpeted stairs brought him to a heavy mahogany door.

A man, who though he wore no livery was apparently a servant, opened the door for the new comer to enter, closing it again immediately, remaining at his post as a sentinel might.

There were eight other men occupying the room when Lord Wellrock entered, six of them being personages whom the police saluted at sight, whose pictures appeared almost daily in newspapers or periodicals. The other two men, whilst not being so well-known in England, bore world-famous names, and carried Highness as a prefix, one indeed called a reigning sovereign brother. This Prince was very evidently dictator here among this group, which, small as it was, held world-stirring powers.

Beneath the quiet restraint evinced by these nine men there throbbed a strong excitement. War! war! war!

The month was April, the year nineteen hundred and fourteen, yet nothing but war and its relevant accessories claimed the attention of these conspirators, five of whom had sworn allegiance to England.

The colloquy was carried on in German. Any day now might witness the outbreak of hostilities.

No other nation but the Fatherland was prepared for war. So much the worse for other countries, for, ready or not, none could stand against the great German Army that could and would ruthlessly mow down any who dared attempt to hinder the almighty machine, of which every cog was oiled, every spoke tested, and which was now mutely waiting to be set in motion. A speedy and

glorious victory lay ahead, which would make Germans acclaimed as conquerors of the world.

England was to be kept out of the war until France, Russia and the near East were satisfactorily disposed of. Then after the few months necessary to subjugate these states, a swift rush, a hard strike, and before Great Britain could draw her sword, or summon her colonies to her aid, she would have acclaimed William the Kaiser as her Emperor.

Every portion of the machine was flawless, the wonderful land Army and its equipment, the Navy assisted by submarines, the airships with which England could be devastated. If she were foolish enough to essay any resistance, rapid and violent would her punishment be in such circumstances.

A German army corps was in readiness here in their very midst, pursuing its apparently peaceful vocation as clerks and artisans. At a moment's notice they could spring to an attack, their equipment, well concealed, lying in wait close at hand, where, each man knew. Guns, ammunition, explosive, incendiary and plague-infested bombs were all prepared and packed away, their releasers waiting for a given signal to cast death and disease broadcast. The German-built local means of transport was so well mined that it could be simply exploded, and cost thousands their lives.

Through the whole of the hemisphere propaganda work had been sedulously effected.

Nothing had been overlooked in this campaign of thoroughness, excepting the seemingly unimportant item of human nature.

England was still dozing; to be sure she had shown signs of rubbing her sleepy eyes into wakefulness, as was evinced last February by the calling up of her naval reservists, but she appeared soothed again to somnolence, so all was well for these cunning threateners of her peace.

Lord Wellrock was an important factor at the confer-

ence. He had been so long in the country, and possessed such numerous and trustworthy channels of information, his fingers were on the pulses of so many people, that his report was listened to with due respect, and high compliments were paid him on his astuteness and loyalty, whether to the land of his birth or that of his adoption it seemed superfluous to say.



## CHAPTER XXI

**I**T was in July when the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and his Consort, at Serajevo, precipitated the whole of Europe into a boiling sea of excitement.

Serbia undertook to inquire into the outrage, and severely punish any of her subjects found to be implicated; but Austria demanded more and humiliating compensations. This was Austria's chance to kill the growth of the Slav nations which threatened her position as ruler of Croats, the Serbs and Slovenes in the Southern provinces. Germany for her own purposes egged her on, and she took it.

"Kendall, does this mean war for England?" Lady Mary inquired of Colonel Coolter, who had been given his command some months ago.

"What do you think?" parried Coolter, not wishing to distress her by voicing his opinions.

"I fear it will come," she admitted.

They were talking gravely of the situation when Marigold and Joan entered.

Joan Saintleigh had been staying for some weeks at Berkeley Square, enjoying the season under Lady Mary's chaperonage.

Marigold had accompanied her husband to London, whither he had suddenly been summoned, and now spent most of his time at the War Office; she and Dickie, too, were guests here.

As they drank tea, the conversation turned on the one all-absorbing topic.

"England must come into the war."

"England could not go to war."

"She would be discredited for ever if she stayed out."

"She would help with her Navy, her land forces could do no good."

"Of what possible use are nine divisions?" (which was approximately what her army consisted of, excluding the troops in the colonies). "The thing was absurd."

This last from Marigold.

"The transport would be the trouble. Why, to move one division with its rifles, guns and artillery would require about ninety trains," declared Colonel Coolter.

Here, in this London drawing-room, as throughout the world, the same subject occupied their thoughts.

The tea-party was joined by Freddie, who had lately been given a private secretaryship to Sir Martin Blackett.

It was the latter who superseded Philip, Duke of Shadford, at the Foreign Office.

"Freddie, are we going to war?" Joan asked him earnestly.

"Don't know," he replied laconically.

"You must. What is the use of your being in the Foreign Office if you don't know important things like that."

"Sir Edward Grey did not tell me," grinned young Scott, "besides, it is Sunday."

"That is nothing; all the officials are at the War Office and the Admiralty and Foreign Office to-day," stated Joan.

"You know such a lot, why question me?" queried Freddie, helping himself generously to jam.

With a queer reluctance they dispersed to dress for dinner, Kendall accepting an invitation to return and join them.

They were dining at eight o'clock; after postponing the meal until half-past, Lady Mary decided to wait no longer for either her husband or son-in-law, neither of whom had returned.

The strain grew more tense, Marigold especially had a hard struggle to maintain an outward semblance of self-control.

About half-past nine a sound of cheering and singing was heard in the Square.

Lady Mary despatched a footman to ascertain the cause, but Freddie with a muttered exclamation was before the lackey.

"Only some Frenchmen singing the 'Marseillaise' and cheering," he informed the anxious diners, on returning and resuming his seat; "they have been serenading their Embassy," he added.

After dinner an ineffectual effort to make time pass rapidly by playing bridge was abandoned. Marigold had revoked twice, and trumped her partner's trick. Freddie pointed out the enormity of her offence; she expressed contrition, but declared it an impossible task to concentrate on cards, when she didn't know where Dickie was.

Colonel Coolter offered to stroll along to Whitehall and make inquiries for her. She gratefully accepted the suggestion, and now while Joan and Freddie played Bézique, and Lady Mary wrote letters, Marigold moved restlessly about. She did not know it, but her time of cruel waiting had begun, with that of millions of other women. She was soon to realise that happiness for her was finished.

No one thought of retiring; there was no talk of bed. Time seemed interminable.

Towards midnight Lady Mary rang. "Has his Lordship returned?" she inquired of the butler.

"Just come in, Milady."

"Has he gone to the library?"

"Yes, Milady."

"Mammie, I must go and ask Father Frederick what is happening," declared Marigold; "please come with me."

"Certainly, darling, we will all go," gently agreed Lady Mary, passing her hand through her daughter's arm. Joan and Freddie followed.

It was years since Lady Mary had entered this room.

It was an unprecedeted occurrence for anyone to visit it, unless especially invited by the owner to do so. Lord Wellrock displayed no surprise. He was exceedingly pale, and looked as though he had just undergone a severe strain.

"Father Frederick, what is the news?" Marigold's voice sounded shrill in her own ears, her eyes were tense with the excitement under which she was suffering.

"England has declared war on Germany."

The intonation, rather than the words, arrested Joan's attention, she never lost the sound; years afterwards, in moments of excitement, she found herself mimicking the tone, as she repeated the six words: "England has declared war on Germany, England has declared war on Germany." Was there rage, triumph, or just natural agitation denoted? She did not know.

There was a second's dramatic pause. Marigold stood rigidly trying to grasp the import of her stepfather's words. Dickie, her Dickie, her beloved husband, would have to take his regiment into battle. For some inexplicable reason she felt a wild wave of rage and hate against the speaker of these words, and more curious still, an antipathy towards that scarlet-bound, gold-lettered volume staring at her from the book-shelf opposite, which she remembered as the book Freddie was being instructed from, on the evening of her intrusion into this room many years ago.

"The fools, they'll get licked." It was Freddie who broke the silence.

His mother knew instinctively that the noun indicated the English in her son's mind; not so Joan.

"Of course they will, and they deserve it, the horrid Germans," she cried.

Then Major Hillrose and Colonel Coolter entered. They came direct to the library, having been informed by the butler where the party was assembled.

Lord Wellrock's information was corroborated. England had sent her ultimatum to Germany, the news was

public, the morning papers would blazon it to the world.

"It will be a quick affair, a couple of months at the outside," prophesied Major Hillrose. "Only thing I'm afraid of is that it will be over before I can get across," he complained.

"Will you have to go, Dickie?"

"Will I have to go?" scoffed Dickie tenderly; "will I rush it, you mean. It will be a nice little scrap, nothing to worry about, I shall be back again before you have left off saying 'good-bye.' "

Marigold moved closer to his side. Despite his cheery promise her heart misgave her; this well-loved man of hers was going into danger, it was her first trial, how would she stand it?

With great frankness, here in the bosom of Hillrose's family, the two soldiers discussed plans of campaign.

Lady Mary said little, she sat watching and listening. Not a word or look escaped her, every sense was acutely tuned to a high pitch of observation; once a fleeting glance passing between father and son almost caused her to scream.

The telepathic message she read aright as one of derision at Kendall's asseveration that the Germans' demolition would be speedy and thorough. She felt as though every nerve in her body was a live wire. Hell could hold no greater torture than that which she was undergoing.

What to do? Again and again that question drummed and throbbed in her brain.

It had been exquisite torture for her to have spoken to her cousin of her suspicions regarding her husband, and after all it had done no good. Now there was her own son as well. She was sure that these two were anti-English, yet what to do, ah! dear God, what to do for the best?

To whom could she go? Would she be credited if she could bring herself to voice her convictions?

Desperately she tried to persuade herself that now war

had really been declared her husband and son would at least remain inactively neutral.

Towards two o'clock the butler entered to inform Lord Wellrock that Mrs. Berry Shipley had called to see him.

The night had assumed such a feeling of unreality, that no one marvelled at the lateness of the hour chosen by the visitor.

"We had better go to bed," suggested Lady Mary, addressing Marigold, as the butler retired to obey his master's orders and show Mrs. Shipley in.

"Well, I must be off, I've got the car waiting outside," stated Major Hillrose.

"Off, where to?" Marigold demanded quickly.

"I must get back at once to the regiment," he explained.

"Not to-night, Dickie?"

"Yes, dear, to-night." His voice was very gentle.

"Then I am coming too," his wife stated firmly.

"Splendid, it is a warm night, the run won't do you any harm," he said, bravely disguising the fact that he would really have preferred to have left her with her mother, "and we can drop Coolter on the way."

"Thanks, Hillrose, I must get to barracks at once," explained Kendall.

"Mrs. Shipley," announced the butler.

"Isn't it exciting, of course you have heard the news, people?" cried Rhoda Shipley. Her lean white face and protruding teeth had something to do with the nickname of the Rodent, by which she was openly known.

Her rat-like appearance was heightened by the bleached white hair which lay heavily on her forehead; she was dressed badly as usual, in bizarre garments, her favourite greens and scarlets predominating.

It was Griselda Transome years ago who had poignantly remarked: "Rhoda loves cheese, hates baths, looks rat, she is Rodent."

The name was appropriate and had clung.

"Yes, we have heard," agreed Lady Mary coldly, avoiding giving her hand in greeting to this woman whom she disliked intensely.

"It is scandalous, I have told Berry he ought to have refused to allow us to be drawn into war against the Germans," she declared.

"Poor Berry, after all, the whole responsibility cannot have been his," remarked Wellrock.

"Oh, well,  
jected Berry's

"Nonsense,  
side and see  
slaughtered by  
roughly. He v  
Rodent.

"The Goths, as , are the most cultured race existent," championed Rodent, "and the English are fools," she supplemented, with supreme aplomb. Then turning to her host, "I saw cars outside, so knew you would be up. I wanted to talk to you, and I have a message from Berry," she said.

Marigold, who had disappeared, returned hatted and cloaked for her motor run, hasty good nights were exchanged, and Wellrock was left alone with his guest; his wife, Joan and Freddie escorting the departing trio to the waiting motor-car.

"A damn fine state of things, isn't it, Wellrock?" demanded the Rodent, helping herself to a cigarette from a well-filled silver box on the desk; then throwing herself into a large morocco armchair, she crossed her legs, and kept up a perpetual swinging of the upper one, back and forth; she was the personification of awkward unrest.

"It is very sad," agreed his Lordship guardedly.

"Sad be blowed, it is a cursed nuisance. Berry should have staved it off for a while, he is too filthily soft. Where are Hillrose and Coolter bound for?"

"Back to their regiments."

up a bigger fight," ob-

could we stand on one  
ance trampled on and  
asked Colonel Coolter  
ajority and disliked the

"Off at once I suppose?"

"Yes."

"I had better tell them, although they will know already. Where is your telephone? oh, here." The Rodent jerked her attenuated body out of the chair, picked up the receiver from a table instrument.

"Wait." Wellrock placed his hand on the bracket from which she had removed the receiver, cutting off connection with the exchange. "Who do you want to talk to?"

"Number one, of course."

"I thought so; then here." As he spoke he moved to a panel in the wall, and touching a spring revealed a small metal and ebony mouth and ear piece, attached by a short length of cord to a plug. "This is a direct connection," he explained.

A rapid, uneasy jerk brought her to his side. "Cunning fox," she remarked with a smile. Picking up the combined mouth and ear piece, she spoke into the receiver, "Hullo, hullo, I wish to speak to his Highness. They didn't ask my name," she said, turning to her host, "will they bring him?"

"Oh, yes, this line is only used by a select few of us."

She had turned again to the telephone.

"That you; it is Rhoda speaking. Isn't it damnable? What's that? Oh, no, I am speaking from Berkeley Square. Yes, he is here now, where is Freda? Poor girl, I wish I could come round, but it won't do now. Tell her to come for a walk at seven o'clock to-morrow morning in the Park, I will meet her. Yes, that is right, I suppose you know they are sending men across to France at once; yes, I thought you would know. I will let you have a full list to-morrow. I will arrange with Freda. If it had not been for those putrid swine, Gilling and Pentry, Berry could have kept the ultimatum back for a while; he did his best, but he is so rottenly weak, he had to give in, or show his hand. I suppose you will have to leave at once. I will miss you both very

much; never mind, it will not be for long. I will do my best for you, so will Berry. Good-night, love to Freda." She replaced the receiver and closed the panel, returning to her former seat.

"Now, Wellrock, where do I stand?"

"As ever, safe."

"I will see to that, but these cursed English are so dogged this time, and God knows what will happen. Siemens are they have to do with us, and God knows what layer, or Bleskowitz, or will be all right, but if ns to me?"

"You mean

"I do.

"Wellrock  
she said or did  
she married. . . .

ruminatively. Nothing he had known her before  
ing, ambitious, extravag-  
gant, mentally and morally bad woman, realising that she could be useful to Germany, he had interested himself in her. Learning that despite her notoriety (or because of it), backed by her birth, she had been unable to land a husband, Wellrock had been the tactician who arranged with Berry Shipley, whom he already had placed under obligations, to marry the Rodent.

Shipley, starting out as a brilliant youngster, had fallen to the extent of accepting a bribe and marrying this woman, after which his moral descent and his worldly ascent had been conjointly rapid. It was due to her influence that he had become a traitor to his country. Drink, to which he had flown for solace, could not altogether deaden this thought, in his sober moments he still experienced slight twinges of conscience.

"I would, but it would not be safe." Wellrock frowned thoughtfully.

"I know that."

"Then what do you suggest?"

"That a sum of money commensurate with the use I have been and can still be shall be invested in a neutral country in my name."

"I shall attend to it."

"At once?"

"To-morrow."

"Dine with me to-morrow night, and tell me what you have done."

"To-night, you mean, it is nearly three o'clock." Then as she rose to go he added, "I beg of you to be careful."

"Of my reputation?" She grinned her evil smile. "Yours, my friend, is far more likely to suffer from a *tête-à-tête* with me, than mine is from being alone in your company."

"You misunderstand, my warning applied to your reckless way of speaking."

"As—?"

"The way you spoke to Coolter, for example."

"Oh, that," contemptuously. "What the Hell can any one say to me; no one dare attack me, my husband's position places me above suspicion," she bragged.

With swift, jerky movements she descended the stairs, and throwing herself into the large distinctive-coloured car, which unmistakably advertised her vicinity, she openly yawned, replying to the courteous farewell of her host, who had accompanied her to her motor, with a careless sideway nod.

The Rodent looked very green and repellent, in the first glimmers of dawn, as she sprawled back against the multi-coloured cushions with which the luxurious equipage was furnished.

## CHAPTER XXII

NOW in nineteen hundred and fifteen Lord Wellrock's f bearing fruit. Determined as he was to compass the d<sup>o</sup>w

Every fountain  
his cunningly con-

His lifelong han<sup>m</sup>  
ing no one, stood  
knowledge were well

ceaseless activity was  
he was as grimly de-  
e of seventeen, to help

was in active use, all  
were running smoothly.  
ing nothing, overlook-  
ad, and his sources of  
s.

His own strongly built up position and his reputation in the City helped him to gain inside intelligence, so did his wife's friends and relations, his step-daughter, her hero husband, who had been back wounded, and was once more with his sadly-changed regiment in Flanders.

The same power that aided him to become possessed of secret reports assisted him in conveying the same to the people for whom he was working.

Germany owed much of any successes she could boast of having gained against the English to Lord Wellrock and his son Freddie. The latter, as private secretary to Sir Martin Blackett at the Foreign Office, learned of diplomatic moves, the full benefit of which were effectually checked through the cognisance of the enemy beforehand.

Anne Raymond, in her tiny flat near Baker Street, under the chaperonage of Mrs. Clarke, would have been horrified had she suspected the uses to which her fairy godfather (it was thus she thought of Lord Wellrock) put the intimate little items of news with which she innocently kept him supplied.

Anne had been happy in her new life, which she took

very seriously, doing her best to help any of the young sailors with whom she came in contact.

A few of her father's old companions, whom she happened to meet, had been very kind to "Larry Raymond's girl." Admiral Sir Babcock and Lady Roofe had completely taken her to their hearts; through such friends she was enabled to meet, on terms of equality, the very class she was so anxious to assist.

Sailors are proverbially simple and trusting. Many of them were easily led to confide in the genuinely sympathetic girl. She would convey the information to Wellrock, who in turn would set on other tentacles to work, to inveigle deftly the fly into the web.

The *modus operandi* was simplicity itself. A carefully-sealed letter, marked strictly private, would be despatched to the momentarily embarrassed one; if it was ignored an insidiously-worded offer of help followed up the first. These persisted until in nine cases out of ten a letter inquiring the condition on which money would be lent would come, after which all was plain sailing: money would be enclosed in the next communication, the terms so generous and so lax that it seemed practically what it was, a gift. As time went on the borrower very often applied for another loan, which was immediately granted; the signed receipt which was always exacted appeared ridiculous security, but this was all the money-lender demanded—at the moment.

For some years before the outbreak of war this subtle game had been successfully played. Suave strangers would stay in seaport towns at hotels known to be frequented by Naval officers, tactfully striking up an acquaintanceship with their marked prey, astutely pumping him. That was in pre-war days; but now these bland seaport visitors, while employing the same means of gaining information, refused to be snubbed; instead, the velvet would be stripped from the cruel iron claw, the sailor would insidiously learn that he would be wise to make friends with the stranger and give him the com-

paratively harmless information required. It was pointed out to him that his indiscretion of having accepted *German money* for so long might make trouble if it got to the ears of the authorities.

The indignant denial that followed would be met with irrefutable facts, the poor fly was tight in the web.

Several gallant young lives paid toll through this dastardly plot which Anne Raymond was so joyfully helping along, but she had the slightest inkling of the downright malignant alternative been the only one offered her.

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of her time to this ap-

She had obtained per-

r to help as a V.A.D.

, where Patty and June

Palmer served in the same capacity. These three girls became great friends, and the adored big brother Terry was often the subject of conversation; he had belonged to the Royal Naval Reserve and was now in a ship somewhere in the North Sea.

Mrs. Palmer, broken in health and inclined to be fretful, her income sadly depleted, had taken a small, inexpensive flat in the same neighbourhood as Anne Raymond's. She had conceived a great affection for the girl, who spent a good deal of her time with Patty and June.

Anne and her companions worked, as women throughout the whole world were now doing, earnestly, heroically, with brave though heavy hearts.

Lady Mary, too, was occupied; she had inaugurated a hospital in Belgravia, where she toiled incessantly. The thought of her husband's and son's treachery never gave her a moment's peace, it obsessed her; only by force of will did she retain an outward calm and apply herself to the alleviation of the returned warriors' suffering.

Joan Saintleigh was one of her principal helpers. A fresh uneasiness beset Lady Mary at Joan's evident in-

terest in Freddie. She could not bear the thought of sweet Joan entrusting her life's happiness to Wellrock's son; it was impossible for her openly to warn the girl, but in surreptitious ways she kept them apart to the best of her ability, awaiting an opportunity to speak to Lord Sandham on the matter.

Personally Joan's father was not favourably impressed with Freddie, but after all the youth was the son of his life-long friend, Mary Cranleigh. The boy's prospects were good, and if he was his daughter's choice, Lord Sandham would acquiesce with the best grace at his command; so ran his thoughts as he sat chatting with Freddie's mother one afternoon.

He failed to realise that Mary was trying to warn him against the match, her position was exceedingly delicate. How could she say, "My son is a spy and a traitor, do not let your daughter marry him?" Yet in sweet Joan's interests she felt it was her duty to do so.

Abandoning the troubled proposition, they drifted into the absorbing one of war. Mechanically she listened to her visitor's views as she sat rolling bandages in the tiny room at the hospital which she reserved for her own use. Shivering slightly, she rose to stir the fire, for the October day was chill. She had grasped the poker, refusing Lord Sandham's courteous offer to act as stoker, when the door burst open, and Marigold entered, her face deathly white, her eyes distended.

"Dickie, Dickie, oh, Mammie, Dickie," she gasped.

"Not—Marigold, not—?"

"Here," Marigold held out the paper she had crushed in her hand; "but it can't be," she protested.

It was Lord Sandham who took the paper from Lady Marigold Hillrose, her mother seemed incapable of speech or movement, she stood petrified holding the poker.

"Oh, that is all right, Marigold," consoled Sandham, after rapidly perusing the contents of the paper, "Dickie is missing, then he is as safe as a house."

"Wounded and missing it says," hoarsely corrected Marigold.

"So I heard—"

"You knew—?" flashed Marigold.

**"I—I heard rumours this morning."**

**"What** did you hear?" she demanded.

"I heard that once more we had been sold, that in some way the Baron Bassée, had led given us a bad midst must have sprang forward she fell in a dead consciously held all the a loud clang to the were attacking at Land, forestalling us, had his spy in our very 'Good God,' and he catch Lady Mary as which she had unconsciously clasp falling with

Day and night Mrs. ... ed the War Office for news of her husband along with hundreds of other drawn-faced men and women, all asking after missing relatives.

"Wounded and missing," that was all she could learn.

Lady Mary had left the house in Berkeley Square to stay in the one in Eaton Place where Marigold with her children had come to await Major Hillrose's hoped-for return.

Not only was the War Office visited, but every hospital was searched where men belonging to Dickie's regiment were reported to be.

Officers and men alike all gave the same answer.

"Major Hillrose had been wounded," the only variation in the information being, some said they thought he was dead, others thought he was badly wounded; none could say with any certainty, the fighting had been so fierce. Marigold gained no relief from anything these men could tell her; she would not, could not, abandon hope.

Lord Wellrock was most sympathetic to his step-daughter; he cabled and wired, sent messengers even

over to France. In his endeavour to help trace the missing man he went himself to interview returned soldiers, who told him many interesting facts, but nothing relative to Marigold's husband, and he called very often at the house in Eaton Place, to speak a word of cheer, to help disperse the gloom that was making itself momentarily felt all over England on account of the depressing rumours that were afloat.

This wonderful man, who derided tidings of ill omen, seemed to hear them before anyone else.

"You must cheer up, Mrs. Transome," he counselled Griselda, whom he met accidentally in the foyer of a fashionable hotel. "Of course I know this report of our bad reverse is not pleasant, but even if one whole regiment has been wiped completely out, that does not mean all hope is lost, come now, does it?"

Or—

"You must not be depressed; if the Germans have a flotilla or so of Zeppelins and if they are determined to smash London to pieces, they cannot daunt British endurance and pluck. Naturally anyone who can, will leave London, self-preservation is not cowardice," were the sort of remarks Lord Wellrock would make, then from mouth to mouth the "regiment completely-wiped-out-in-an-hour and the hundreds-of-Zeppelin" stories would fly, increasing as they went.

The rumours department was large and important, one small section of it being under the capable management of Gustav Lemberg. He and his supernumeraries travelled thousands of miles every week, in and about the British Isles, in trains, boats, tubes, omnibuses, and as they voyaged they gleaned stray bits of knowledge, which were as useful to the German cause for which they worked, as the information they gave to their fellow passengers in return.

Gustav's favourite method of gaining credence, and one that brought him much success, was to confide in an audible tone to his near neighbour, in whatever vehicle

he happened to be, his distress over a hypothetical son, or perhaps a couple.

The terrible tales of distress his boy, or boys, wrote or brought back from the front, the supernatural power of the enemy, their overwhelming numbers of men and armaments, the foolishness of sacrificing young untrained men against well-drilled Germans, how his boy said, "most of the chaps are fed-up and want to chuck it, but I mean to stick it to the end."

How he (Gustav) did not believe that General So-and-so was a traitor, in spite of general opinion to the contrary, nor did he place any credence in the story that Smith, Jones or Brown (any politician served who had been unfortunate enough to come into popular disfavour for the moment) was causing the sacrifice of thousands of men to gratify a whim of his own.

Gustav & Co. always feebly discredited these stories which they set afloat. Had their true object been to disseminate trust in leaders and politicians, they would have had cause to feel sadly depressed at their lack of success;—if, on the contrary, their aim was to diffuse distrust and seething discontent, they might well chuckle and rub their hands gleefully, as they ruminated over each day's labour.

*The battle for Germany was being as vigorously fought in the heart of England as in the Flanders trenches.*

## CHAPTER XXIII

WEARY months passed. Lady Marigold still clung to the hope that Dickie was alive. Untiringly she followed up the very slightest clue that offered, only to meet with fresh disappointments.

With a commendable effort she restrained any outward show of grief, and threw herself feverishly into the duties of a nurse at her mother's hospital. In this work, and care of her three children, she found some solace.

It was here in Belgravia that Colonel Coolter was nursed; the shrapnel wounds in his head were miraculously slight, but his left arm was missing.

"No more fighting for me, I am afraid; rotten nuisance, we need every available man," had been his only comment, as he surveyed the empty coat-sleeve pinned across his chest.

The need of men to which England's best and bravest had so nobly responded, led to a little scene in the English Bank of which Lord Wellrock was the head.

Mr. Trent had adhered to his pacifist principles during the first twelve months after war had been declared. The hitherto happy household, of which he was the master, had fallen on dissentious days, for Ronald and Paul were openly chafing at a paternal restraint that prevented their joining the colours and fighting for their country; their manly desire was upheld by Mrs. Trent, who volubly disapproved of her husband's peace doctrine.

One morning, Mr. Trent waited grim-faced and stern for his chief's arrival.

"My sons have both joined up," he announced, the moment his Lordship entered the bank.

"How is this, Trent, do I understand you aright, that your boys have actually entered the Army?"

"Yes, I am sorry, sir; fighting is against my principles; besides which, I had told them that you could not spare any more men from the bank, but last night they signed on for the duration of the war."

"Ungrateful young scoundrels," stormed his Lordship, and his secretary agreed with him.

However, Ronald and Paul had made argument useless. Wellrock and Trent, realising this, said little more about it, and the two enthusiastic youngsters, looking smart and healthy after a few months' training, were cordially greeted by their forgiving father and proud mother when they ran home for a few hours' leave.

After his own sons became soldiers, Mr. Trent's pacifist arguments dwindled, and eventually died, fatherly love proving stronger than dogma.

It was at this period that Lady Mary's fears were realised, for Freddie and Joan became engaged. As she kissed the smiling girl, and wished her every happiness, the bridegroom elect's mother could have wept with sorrow that it should be pretty Joan's fate to become her son's wife.

Lord Wellrock was well pleased on being told the news; apart from the fact that the Saintleigh family was a noble English one, of the very type he wished Freddie to enter, as a married man, his son could more easily evade military duties. Up to date, his position at the Foreign Office had served as an excuse, but a portion of the press was making the "Cuthberts in Whitehall funk-holes" unpleasantly notorious.

A wife might assist Freddie to escape some of the scathing criticism to which such slackers as himself had been properly submitted.

The English-born Freddie was justifying the fruit of his birth. The dogged persistence and foresight with which Otto Frederick Schultz had schemed, his every move, even to the marrying of a noble-born English-woman, and begetting an English son, was bearing a satisfactory reward. Freddie was invaluable, for the doubt

and suspicion towards all and sundry that was holding England in its grip, making it increasingly difficult to supply Germany with useful and speedy information, passed over the banker's ostentatiously British son.

Freddie, in his rôle as courier, carrying despatches across to France (in which capacity he was sometimes used), was impervious to searches or questionings, and therefore bore with impunity secret documents, of which the British authorities knew nothing.

It was on one of these official missions that he crossed to Dunkirk, and after delivering the weighty package, its seals apparently untampered with (part of his training had been the delicate art of opening and closing sealed parcels, without rousing suspicions in the recipient's mind), to the authorities commissioned to receive it, Freddie strolled into the hotel to have luncheon. He was waiting for an opportunity to visit Saint Omer, where a German agent resided, to convey to him certain letters he had brought from London, also the contents of the sealed epistles he had just handed over to an English Navy Commander.

He was hailed by Valerie, Mrs. Transome's daughter, now the wife of Captain Rooper. She had motored in from Malo les Bains for stores she was expecting to arrive from England by the Admiralty boat for the hospital she had inaugurated, and had come in here for a meal, while awaiting the arrival of the ship.

The room was very full, mainly with British, French and Belgian officers; no tables were free, therefore Freddie willingly availed himself of the invitation extended to him by Mrs. Rooper.

During the meal, his quick eyes recognised Cleo, with whom he had been so enamoured in Paris. She was lunching with a famous Belgian General and the equally well-known French politician, Monsieur Chalembert.

Freddie grinned quietly at the picture, she was undoubtedly clever. He idly speculated on what she cost the Fatherland, for he had discovered during his short

acquaintance with her in Paris that she possessed expensive tastes.

After Mrs. Rooper had departed in her car in search of the missing stores, Freddie, strolling through the *Place*, met Cleo. She was alone, they greeted one another, and, acting on her suggestion, he accompanied her back to her sitting-room at the hotel where they had lunched. Here they sat chatting, she openly deriding Monsieur Chalembert, boasting of the facility with which she gained information from him.

Freddie, in turn, confided in his fellow spy the reason of his loitering in Dunkirk.

She, expressing her admiration of his astuteness, offered to drive him to Saint Omer in her ambulance car. She was an expert chauffeur, and was attached to a local French hospital in that capacity.

True to her promise, she motored him out to Saint Omer, and better still, brought him back, bidding him adieu at the hotel, where he was spending the night, to await the departure of the boat by which he was returning to Dover the following day.

"Look 'ere, my young frien'," she said, before she left him, "you mus' not come some more to France."

"Why not?" he enquired.

"You are too fond of womans, you think you are clevaire, but you are a stupid one."

"Rot, I am as clever as you, and that's saying something," he growled.

"I 'ave warn' you, it is better you stop away."

"Good old Cleo, frightened I will get into trouble," he smirked.

"My God, what a conceited one you are," she retorted, calmly contemptuous. "I talk to you like a frien' for the sake of your Maman, not for your silly self."

"Come off it," he snarled, his self-esteem wounded, "it was not for my mother's sake you loved me in Paris."

"Love you? *tu me ravis, je ne pense pas, toi, sot à*

*triple étage*, what I say to you is not for your beautiful self, but for your Maman," she repeated.

"And in Paris for my money, I suppose," he jeered, furious at her cold scorn.

"*Bien sûr*, for your money, why else should a womans trouble with you? Remembaire what I tell you, keep away from France. *Au revoir*," with a careless nod she drove off, leaving a furiously chagrined Freddie to ponder over what she had said.

It was with a sense of deep misgiving that Lady Mary heard of Freddie's departure for "somewhere in France." She had noticed that in close juxtaposition to her son's visits abroad, there followed ominous rumours of some British Army or Navy proposed move having become known to the enemy, and her acutely sharpened power of conjecture led her to surmise the truth.

One afternoon, on visiting one of her wards, she noticed Sir Martin Blackett, her son's chief, sitting by the bedside of a wounded officer. At once her decision was made, she would try and warn Sir Martin to be wary of trusting anyone, even his most confidential clerks.

Pausing to greet the visitor, she invited him to call in at her sanctum on the termination of his chat with the invalid.

The task she had set herself was very difficult; gradually she led up to the subject of spies.

"It really seems as though no one was to be trusted," she remarked.

"One is forced to that conclusion," agreed Sir Martin.

"To see these splendid specimens of humanity returning torn and maimed, to know that, often, thousands of them are wounded and killed through treachery, makes one doubly careful," she sighed, "and in your official capacity, Sir Martin, the leakage of information must be a continual source of anxiety to you."

"Quite true, but I do not think spies learn much from our department."

"Perhaps not. I suppose you are very careful, still,

beyond doubt the enemy does become possessed of authentic intelligence. Were I in a position such as yours I would trust no one, no one," she repeated with emphasis.

"As a matter of fact I do not," he admitted, "only three men besides myself have access to my office—your son, Hetherington and Cowlie. I am sure you will agree with me that they are beyond suspicion, Lady Mary."

"I cannot accede to your assumption, Sir Martin," she smiled, "otherwise I would be contradicting my statement that I would trust no one."

"Oh, come, that is very sweeping, surely your——"

"No one, I said, no one," she interrupted hastily; "had I knowledge, the leakage of which might harm our men, I would not trust my nearest and dearest with it, even though I might entrust my own life with these same people," she added.

"These spy stories are unnerving you," he said gravely.

"Well, let us take it that secrets are learned by German agents through the carelessness of those cognisant with facts. A lightly spoken word or so from an unsuspecting mouth, belonging to someone too young or guileless to be guarded enough, would suffice to accomplish as much harm as a professional spy, now wouldn't it?" she asked.

"Certainly, but you need not fear that I or any member of my staff are either spies or incautious," he laughed, as he rose to go.

"Of course not, but you will be careful, won't you?" she pleaded.

Giving the desired promise, he left her, and drove direct to a meeting that was being held in the City, to agitate for a search and denunciation of "The Hidden Hand," which most assuredly dwelt in their midst, protecting Germans, German firms and money, supplying the enemy with news, and generally undermining the country.

Sir Martin Blackett joined Lord Wellrock on the

platform, and after both of them had attended with every sign of sympathy to the speeches, loudly applauding the speakers, they left the hall together, driving to Wellrock's establishment in Berkeley Square. In the sanctuary of his Lordship's library they found much to say to one another.

Among the various topics which they discussed, the enormous amount of munitions shipped from America to the Allies formed one of the subjects.

"I held up the cable to America ordering that further supply of spelter as long as possible," explained Blackett.

"Good, and Kuhn got his papers through all right, I hope?" asked Wellrock.

"Yes, he left yesterday, via Spain for America."

"Kuhn is clever, he has even managed to get on the right side of those pugnacious bull-dogs, Gilling and Pentry."

"I noted from his credentials that Gilling had vouched for him; he is authorised to arrange for another consignment of acetone, is he not?"

"He is, the orders are to be placed with firms who must guarantee to pay a heavy indemnity if the goods are not delivered up to scheduled time."

"I do not grasp the idea," confessed Sir Martin.

"The indemnity will be forfeited," coolly announced Wellrock.

"A clever move," praised Blackett, "so was Shipley's Wages Bill; this enormous increase to be paid for unskilled labour will cause trouble in the near future, and eventually land the country in a rebellion."

"Shipley carried it through, but it was his wife from whom the suggestion emanated."

"She is deuced clever, but rather reckless."

"Her disregard of public opinion will kill Shipley and his party, she is too sure of herself and her position."

"You are right, could not you warn her? On every hand there is open talk of the Shipley pro-German tendencies. I heard to-day of a cheque that fool Blatz had

paid a dressmaker's account for her with. The whole country is gossiping about it, along with many of her other indiscretions; it will end in Shipley being chucked out, and Pentry will step into his shoes."

"Women are never to be trusted," growled Wellrock.

"By the way, talking of women, I had a talk with your wife this afternoon; does she suspect anything?"

"Why?"

"She seemed to be trying to warn me against her own son."

"What did she say?"

Blackett retailed the gist of his conversation with Lady Mary. Wellrock listened in silence.

"She has nothing definite to go on. I shall speak to my son, and tell him to be on his guard—not that Frederick needs the warning, he is very discreet."

"So I have always found him—extraordinarily so for such a young man."

"I have trained him from birth to keep his own counsel," explained Wellrock.

Then the conspirators parted.

A few weeks later, news of his son caused Lord Wellrock to wonder if his trust in Freddie's astuteness had not been misplaced.

This doubt followed on an unofficial visit paid him by Monsieur Chalembert, the French politician with whom Cleo had been lunching in Dunkirk.

The outside world never heard of this visit to England, for the Frenchman had come incognito; he and Wellrock were old acquaintances, they had much to confide to one another. Then:

"There is one personal matter of which I must speak to you," Monsieur Chalembert announced. "It is in connection with your son."

"Nothing to do with his work, I hope?"

"He has been denounced to me in my official capacity as a German spy."

"Good God!" Wellrock was seldom disturbed from

his cultivated nonchalance, but this report was startling.  
"By whom?" he asked.

"A Frenchwoman, in Dunkirk, who recognised him when he visited there some few weeks ago."

"How did she know?"

"He told her of his secret mission to Saint Omer. In fact, she drove him to the very house where our agent lives, waited for him, and motored him back again to Dunkirk."

"This is most unlike my son; he has always been the soul of discretion. How came it that he confided in the woman?" enquired Freddie's father.

"Ah, that! You must ask your son; he is young, the lady is fascinating, and very clever," a shrug of the shoulders completed the sentence.

"I have taken care that he should meet and learn women from his earliest youth, in order that he should be immune from their wiles. They are no novelty to him, young as he is. There must be something more in this than the infatuation you imply. Who is she?"

"She is known to me merely as Cleo, a famous actress who——"

"Cleo, is she in the French Secret Service?"

"But yes. You know her?"

"I have known her for years, although I have lost track of her for some time now. I had always understood she was one of our agents."

"That is Cleo's cleverness. Ah! she is a wily one."

"She knows too much, she must be silenced," harshly stated Wellrock; this news had shaken him badly.

"We must be careful," the Frenchman was very bland; "but it would not be wise to send your son again to France, otherwise I would be forced to take unpleasant proceedings, in order to prove my loyalty to France." He smiled cynically, and rising, extended his hand in farewell.

"That would indeed be distressing," admitted Well-

rock; "believe me, not because he is my son, but because he is useful to the cause."

"Ah, you are truly wonderful; but tell me, my friend, why is it you give your life to this work? For me, I tell you frankly, it is for money; but you have wealth, position, everything. Is it love for your Germany?"

"No, hate of England," the tone was bitterly vindictive; "my love of the Fatherland takes secondary place in my emotions."

"That is the way with you Germans; you hate more than you love," airily remarked Monsieur Chalembert as he bowed a smiling adieu.

Lord Wellrock was left a prey to most disturbing thoughts; this was one of the very few mistakes he had made. Cleo, as his old friend, he had thought a useful ally; as a French spy she was too dangerous to be at liberty. He must attend to the matter at once.

## CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN Colonel Coolter was discharged from hospital, his services were immediately requisitioned for the War Office, where he was given a most responsible position.

After his day's work he generally walked across St. James's Park, and called at the hospital in Belgravia to chat with the patients and talk to Lady Mary and her daughter before going on to his apartments in Jermyn Street.

One evening Lady Mary had gone back to Eaton Place, where she was still staying with Marigold, leaving word for Colonel Coolter to come to her there, as she wished to see him.

"I simply could not stand the hospital," she explained, when he joined her in the spacious room on the first floor, which Marigold had turned into a cosy sitting-room; "a lot of fresh cases came through. The Germans have been using some obnoxious gas. I am a coward, my heart failed me, so I have deserted for to-night."

"A rest will do you good, you have been sticking to it too closely," consoled Colonel Coolter.

"I think that is the reason I felt so depressed," she admitted with a rueful little laugh, "just that I *could* rest when I wanted to, whereas you men at the front cannot."

"No more trenches for me," Kendall sighed.

Involuntarily both of them glanced at the empty sleeve.

"This loss of life and limb is terrible. I would not feel it so much if it was a straight fight, but it is not."

"How do you mean, Mary?"

"These wretched German tricks are appalling; our men are clean fighters, they cannot, will not, descend to the despicable methods of their enemies."

"Oh, we give the Hun something to think about, he does not have it all his own way, you know."

"My breaking point came this afternoon when Major Russell, you remember Fay——?"

"Old Faysham Russell, I should rather think I did; is he back?"

"Yes, arrived home to-day; he will have to lose a leg."

"Poor old chap, hard lines, but Fay is a cheery soul, he will take it all right."

"You all do take it all right, that is what breaks our hearts, we women I mean; you take death, loss of legs, arms, eyes, health, whatever your fate, you accept it it with a jest and smile."

"No good weeping, is it?"

"Fay ignored his own wounds, but he was deeply distressed at the loss his regiment had sustained."

"Badly cut up, were they?"

"Very. He was devoted to his men, there is only a handful of them left."

"Rotten luck, but it is all in the game you know, and I am willing to wager Fay and his chaps gave the swine better or worse than they got; he would be prepared for them all right."

"That is just it, they were taken by surprise."

"Good Lord, that is not like old Fay."

"It was not his fault, it was due to treachery."

"Whose?"

"Someone who knew every detail of their plans, the strength of their trenches, the very names and nicknames of the officers, of even the non-commissioned officers."

"There is a lot of secret service work employed in warfare you know; we have our—agents, as well as the Germans."

"Yes, but what puzzled Fay was, that he had received orders from General Headquarters delivered to him in

correct form. Obeying the directions he led his men straight into an ambush, carefully prepared by the enemy. There was a fierce fight, our men were overwhelmingly outnumbered, and, unprepared as they were for so sudden an attack, they were mowed down. The Germans swept on, bayoneting the wounded as they passed. Heaven be praised, they overlooked Fay, but he saw many of his fellow officers and his men finished in the cruellest manner. By mistake the fiends stuck a bayonet into one of their own officers who had fallen. He cursed them horribly, and before he died told Fay that this attack had been arranged by the Germans from London."

"My God! oh, he was lying."

"No, that is what has upset me. Immediately on his arrival here Fay sent to the War Office asking to see someone in authority at once. Several officials came. When they saw how ill he was, they suggested postponing the interview until he was a little easier. The doctors advised them to gratify his wish, as his temperature was rising from feverish anxiety.

"It transpired that Fay was to have been court-martialled, for what they had taken to be his impulsive attempt to make an unprepared attack. He convinced them of his innocence, told them of the orders he had received, also what the dying German had confessed. Such orders had never been sent, although they came to Fay couched in our secret code, to all appearances genuine in every respect. Some spy who was intimate with our methods had sold us; evidence led them to conclude that the spy, or spies, were here in London, living in our very midst at this moment, no doubt moving unsuspected among us, selling us, taking blood money, giving our wonderful men over to slaughter. Kendall, I cannot stand it, I cannot, I cannot."

The overwrought woman burst into a torrent of tears, she crouched low in her chair, her head bent in her hands.

"Mary, Mary, don't. Oh! my dear, my poor, poor dear, don't, don't." Colonel Coolter crossed hurriedly to the weeping figure, he knelt in front of her, his remaining arm placed across her shoulder.

It was thus that Freddie found them. He had called to see if Joan, who was residing with Marigold and Lady Mary during Lord Sandham's absence from town, had returned from the hospital at which she worked.

He passed the servant who admitted him, and ran lightly up the stairs, to ascertain for himself if Joan was in. Neither occupants of the room saw, or heard him; Freddie drew back, and standing outside the door, listened.

"I am sorry, Kendall, but it is all so dreadful," sobbed Mary.

"War is dreadful," he reminded her gently; "but I cannot bear to see you so distressed."

"I am sorry, it is cowardly of me to give way like this," she said, making a brave effort to regain her self-control.

"No, my dear, you are no coward, it is natural you should be distressed at poor Russell's story."

"It is not only Fay, it is all of you. I grieve for every man, whether officer or private, who marches away so bravely to protect his country, to fight for us. I used to think I would go mad when you were away, and I had no one to turn to for sympathy."

"Mary," he drew her to him and reverently kissed her. Neither of them recalled the last time he had caressed her, some thirty years ago. So much had happened since then, and that time seemed to belong to another life altogether.

"The thought of you, of our great friendship, one not granted to many mortals, has been my only solace. I love you, my dear; God knows it has been a hard struggle to refrain from telling you again and again of my love, but you have known it always, haven't you?"

"Yes, Kendall, in my bitterest moments that knowl-

edge has been my only gleam of joy. Now I want to speak to you of this affair which poor Fay has brought so vividly in front of me."

"You mean these spies? Every German should be shot, chucked out of the country, or interned," declared Colonel Coolter grimly. Rising from his knees he seated himself beside this woman to whom he had given his life's devotion, and taking her hand, gently stroked it.

"You say that, Kendall, but if it came to the point, you would make exceptions, as everyone in authority does."

"Not I; every German born subject, man or woman, I would put out of the way."

"And—my husband?" she asked quietly.

"My God, I er—oh, well, of course I had quite forgotten Wellrock was a German."

"Was?"

"He has lived in England all his life, hasn't he? He is almost English."

"He is German, through and through German."

"Mary, what are you saying?"

"I am telling you the truth, Kendall, not idly or on the spur of the moment. I am telling you what I should have told you years ago, what I did vaguely tell, oh, it must be nearly twenty years ago, when Freddie was a baby, a cunning, plotting little mite of five or so. Even then I felt uneasy. Do you remember just before Marigold went to Germany I told you that Otto Frederick Schultz used me as he did his other marionettes, as pieces on a board, to be shifted about to play his game?"

"I recollect, but I thought it was just a notion that the years had dissipated."

"On the contrary it has grown stronger, fed on facts."

"Surely not."

"A few years ago you must have heard gossip about me?"

"Good God, no, Mary; no one would dare associate your name with——"

"No, no, no, Ken, not that sort of scandal, but idle talk regarding my health, must have come to your ears."

"I—yes, I did hear you were not very well, or something," he hesitated.

"'Or something' means that the rumour cleverly set afloat by my husband respecting my sanity, reached you."

"What would he do that for?"

"Because I had been indiscreet enough to tell him I had found him out, that I knew him for what he was, a German spy."

"Wellrock——? Your husband—oh, surely not?"

"I am quite certain of it; I can give you irrefutable facts," she stated quietly.

"But, my dear, if that is so, what are you going to do?" he asked, aghast.

"That is the question I have been asking myself for years, now you must help me decide, for I cannot remain silent any longer."

"But, Wellrock"—he seemed dazed—"Wellrock of all men; he has always seemed so patriotic, your husband, and—and there is the boy, he is English."

"As English as his father."

"Young Freddie?"

"Freddie is his father's tool; he must be placed in some position where he cannot do any harm; it is Wellrock who is the danger."

"You are placing a grave responsibility on my shoulders, Mary."

"I know it, it is terrible, but we must face it; nothing should deter anyone from doing their duty to England, be that duty ever so unpleasant. My husband is a spy, he must be treated as such," she announced firmly.

"But you, how appalling——"

"No consideration for me must stand in the way of your duty, as an English soldier."

"And—and—Freddie?"

"He is a pawn on the board, one of his father's puppets; he could easily be rendered harmless. One other thing I am determined to do, that is to stop this marriage; I will not have Joan's life blighted as mine has been. I shall see Sandham at once; if he will not break his daughter's engagement to Freddie at my request, I shall tell him the truth."

"Denounce your own son as a spy?" There was great pity in his voice for the woman whose hand he felt grow tense in his own."

"If needs be."

Here the eavesdropper crept quietly away, noiselessly descending the stairs. He let himself out through the front door, and went off at a great pace, as though he had some definite object in view which must be achieved at once.

"Can you give me any reason for your suspicions, Mary?" asked Colonel Coolter.

"Many," she replied, there and then briefly recounting the numerous incidents which had forced her to the conviction she now held.

The man sat listening intently, only interrupting in order to put a terse question or so to Lady Mary, who wasted no words, but quietly and logically confided her story.

"I must go and think this over alone," Colonel Coolter eventually announced.

"Remember all that is at stake, and act soon, Kendall; we must neither spare ourselves nor anyone else where England is concerned. Personal feelings must be stifled, no matter what the sacrifice. It is that spirit which is making me dine at the Shipleys' to-night."

"Those people!" His disgust was evident.

"I feel about them as you do, but it is politic to see them occasionally." She bade him good-bye, and went slowly to her room to dress for the dinner-party.



## CHAPTER XXV

**O**N leaving the house in Eaton Place, Freddie hastened direct to Berkeley Square, and now in the library in which his worst characteristics had been painstakingly developed, he sat facing his father.

"You have failed in discretion, Frederick, and so have forfeited my trust." Lord Wellrock spoke sternly.

"Oh!" Down dropped Freddie's eyelids. It was typical of his nature that he asked no questions; he had discovered that one learns much more by remaining silent and letting others talk.

"You have been denounced as a spy."

Freddie nonchalantly lighted a cigarette, carefully replacing the dead match on the ash-tray.

"Really?" he said, inhaling a mouthful of smoke.

"Through your own lack of discernment, and owing to your garrulousness."

The latter part of this statement drew from the younger man a sardonic smile. He was no chatterer, he knew his father was aware of this fact; he did not yet know that the main cause of his parent's irritability was due to the knowledge that he was as much to blame over this affair as his son, for, wily as he was, Cleo had deceived him for many years.

"I have always warned you to trust no one, least of all a woman."

"Did I?" Freddie was lounging back enjoying his cigarette.

"You actually allowed a woman to drive you to Saint Omer and back to Dunkirk, visited her in her private apartments, and told her the object of your visit."

"Oh, her, she is one of us."

"She is a French spy." The words were rasped out venomously.

"Is she now?" Beyond a further dropping of his lids, this excellently trained young man betrayed no sign of agitation.

"She has denounced you as a German spy to the French authorities."

"Sly little Cleo." The apparent flippancy annoyed Wellrock.

"Do you know what that means if you are caught in France?" he demanded.

"Shot at dawn, or some such beastly hour."

"Certainly you would be shot."

"I had better avoid France, then."

"Valuable as your life may be to you, we have other agents; those who have proved their possession of intelligence and power to preserve secrecy."

"Wonderful!" murmured Freddie.

"Abandon this pose of unconcern and listen seriously, Frederick," ordered his father. "You were born to fulfil a certain mission; if you fail, I will disown you."

"You introduced me to *la belle Cleo*," commented Freddie.

"I did not tell you to confide in her," countered Wellrock.

"Nor to distrust her; actually, I believe you rather put faith in the captivating lady yourself."

"Do you dare impugn my discretion?" Wellrock was amazed at the youth's audacity.

"Something like it," admitted Freddie.

"Has it ever entered your head to speculate as to what you would do, were I to cast you adrift?"

"Never."

"Then I would advise you to do so without further delay."

"Your advice is wasted, as my time would be, were I to give it to such idle speculation."

"How dare you!" Wellrock was in a white heat of temper.

"On the contrary, how would you dare 'cast me adrift,' I think was your expression?"

There was a cold, hard silence, during which Freddie smoked tranquilly; he gave his father time to dwell on the truth of his suggestion, Wellrock feeling as a leopard might, whom a contemptible little household kitten had turned on in fight and beaten.

"No use threatening me, because Cleo is not what we thought her." Freddie broke the silence. "I will leave you to deal with the affair. I must keep out of France."

"True, and no one in England would believe that my son was a spy," agreed Wellrock. The menacing tone was now lacking in his voice, he was learning a different Frederick.

"I would not be too sure about that, if I were you."

"What do you mean?"

"I have just heard Mother telling Kendall some interesting facts about you."

Now it was Freddie who talked and his father who listened, hearing with no feeling, beyond noting it down in his mind as something which he might use, of Kendall's and his wife's tenderness and caresses to one another.

In listening to the disturbing news, Wellrock committed a solecism of which he was not often guilty: he quite forgot time, and only remembered the Shipleys' dinner-party, where he was to have been a guest, about the period when the banquet must have been drawing to a close.

Late as it was when he and his son separated, Wellrock embarked on a plan of campaign to circumvent his wife and Colonel Coolter.

Calling for his hat and coat, he left the house and, hailing an empty taxi-cab, drove to Baker Street, when the chauffeur halted at the number supplied him by his fare. He was told to ask for Mrs. Clarke, and give

the woman a message; his instructions were obeyed, and very quickly Mrs. Clarke appeared.

"Get in," ordered Wellrock.

When she was seated beside him, the chauffeur was bidden to drive to 303, Jermyn Street, St. James'; while he was complying with the command, Mrs. Clarke received her instructions.

"You remember Colonel Coolter?"

"Yes, Milord."

"He is living in Flat Two, at Three hundred and three Jermyn Street. You are to take a suite in the same building, watch him, learn all that he does, note all his visitors, their names, the time they come, how long they stay, enter his rooms whenever you can safely do so, examine his correspondence, bear in mind all you ascertain, write nothing that is dangerous. Feidelberg will be useful, he is night porter at the place; you know him, I believe?"

"Yes, Milord. When am I to go there?"

"To-night. I will leave you in Jermyn Street. Explain to Feidelberg it is compulsory for you to have rooms there at once; take the taxi back to Baker Street, tell Miss Raymond you have been suddenly called to the bedside of a dying relative, drive back to Jermyn Street, and begin your watch to-night. Come to my office tomorrow at three o'clock. That is all. Good-night," and stepping out of the taxi, as it drew to a standstill, Lord Wellrock, leaving the cab to his servile dependent, walked back along Jermyn Street, up St. James', across Piccadilly, his brain revolving a dozen schemes.

He was thinking of his wife and Kendall Coolter, Cleo and Freddie. The latter had been invaluable in communicating with agents abroad, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to convey news. Frederick had been very useful in this capacity as messenger. He was frowning over this thought, when he reached his own door. As he entered his library an inspiration struck him; it made him smile and nod approvingly to himself. Then cross-

ing to his desk, he drew a small gold key from his pocket, unlocked a drawer, and producing a telegraph form, he wrote thereon a short message in code, signed it as "Tautz," dried it in front of the fire, in order that the ink would not look too new, stamped the form with a rubber stamp leaving the imprint of a City of London Cable Office address, inclosed it in an envelope, on which he indited his own name and address, damped the gum on the flap, and when it was firmly fastened, he tore it roughly open, placed it in his breast pocket, and once more left the house. Again he hailed a taxi-cab, and, driving to the Hospital in Belgravia, entered and asked if Lady Marigold Hillrose was still there. On being answered in the affirmative, he sent a message begging her to see him at once.

Presently Marigold, garbed in her nurse's costume, entered her mother's small private room where Lord Well-rock was waiting.

Of late years she had not seen much of her stepfather; ever since the day when the new servant had momentarily appeared in her mother's house, she had distrusted and wondered about him.

She was puzzled as to his object in calling at this hour, here, where he so rarely visited.

"Marigold, late as it is, I had to come," he said quickly on her entrance.

"What is it—Mammie?" She was apprehensive of trouble.

"No, sit down"—he took her hand and led her unresistingly to a seat—"good news never kills, and it is good news I bring you to-night."

"Dickie?—oh, it is—quick, quick, what—?" Her hands had flown to her throat, her heart gave one wild throb, then almost ceased beating.

"Yes, Dickie."

"What? Tell me, he is alive? Oh, tell me, tell me quick!" Her voice was a hoarse shriek.

"Yes, he is alive."

"God be praised! My Dickie, oh, my husband! Where, how did you hear, Father Frederick? Tell me, quick, quick!" Unrestrained the tears poured down her cheeks.

"Just the briefest message, Marigold," replied Well-rock, slowly taking the envelope from his pocket, and drawing out the form on which he had so lately written, in carefully disguised hand. "See, it is in code."

She snatched the paper from his hand and looked at it.

"What does it say? Are you sure? Read it to me."

"It briefly states" (taking the paper gently from her hand and regarding it as though reading), "'Hillrose wounded prisoner in Germany.'"

As he finished the message, Marigold threw both her arms stiffly in front of her, the palms of her hands turned outwards, her face still wet with undried tears. She laughed unrestrainedly; it was not hysteria, but pure joy.

"Alive! alive! My man, my man! Oh, how wonderful! I have always felt it, I have never believed he was dead. Can I communicate with him? Why has he never written? Is he badly wounded? Who sent you the news? What camp is he at?" Ten years seemed to have fallen from Marigold's age; her eyes blazed with excitement.

"I have never ceased my efforts to trace Dickie; I am very fond of him, you know, Marigold." A slight tinge of reproach struck the happy woman's ears, she flushed slightly and rising, crossed swiftly to the bearer of good tidings, towards whom she had been feeling resentful, while all the time he had been working for her.

"I am sure you are, Father Frederick," she said softly, as she bent and kissed him.

"Thank you, my dear. Well, this Tautz" (hitting the form with the back of his hand) "is a Swiss, whom I sent to try and trace tidings of Dickie; at last, apparently, he has got this information, which he has wired me."

"It may not be true; he may have been mistaken." The

## YELLOW SOULS

very thought dimmed the glad light in her eyes.

"Not Tautz; he is too cautious to send a message like this unless he was certain."

"Then who hasn't Dickie written?"

"Perhaps —"

"Of course," she interrupted, answering her own question, "he must have been too badly wounded."

"Just so, allow the postman to write telling him to

"Yes, yes, and tell him to make haste." She picked up the telephone receiver from the table near by, as she spoke. "I must ring Mammie up and tell her," she explained.

After a few moments' wait, she was put into communication with her own house in Eaton Place.

"Is that you, Parks?" she asked; then: "Ask her Ladyship to speak. Not in? Is Miss Joan still up? Yes, ask her to come to the telephone. Mammie is not home yet; she is very late, it is nearly twelve o'clock," Marigold remarked to Wellrock, while she waited for Joan to be summoned to the telephone. "Hullo, that you, Joan? My dear, the most wonderful news. Dickie is alive! Yes, isn't it too beautiful for words? Father Frederick heard from Switzerland. I am so happy. If you go to bed before Mammie comes in, leave a note asking her to ring me up. Good-night," and Marigold put the receiver down. "Strange, I hope Mammie is all right," she remarked.

"It does seem queer," agreed Wellrock; "she was dining at the Shipleys' to-night."

"I will ring them up, and ask if Mammie is there."

"No," she announced a minute later, after having spoken to the Shipleys' butler, "they say Mammie left a couple of hours ago."

"I will make inquiries and let you know later; she may have gone to Berkeley Square for something," Wellrock surmised.

"Good-night, Father Frederick, and thank you ever and ever so much; you have made me the happiest woman in the world," she smiled, as she waved him farewell from the door-step a little later.

"A splendid move! A positive stroke of genius!" chuckled Wellrock to himself. Now he must arrange that all communications addressed to Hillrose would be safely received and opened by someone who would understand the guileless-looking letters he would write to the pseudo Dickie. Splendid!

No thought of pity for the widow, who now thought of herself as a wife. Only a relief in finding a way to replace, in some measure, Frederick as a courier to the Germans.

On leaving his father, Freddie had returned to Eaton Place; knowing his mother was dining out, he hoped to find Joan alone, and was not disappointed. She was sitting reading in front of the fire in the room which Lady Mary and Colonel Coolter had occupied earlier in the day.

"Hullo, Freddie, you are very late; I was just thinking of going to bed," she greeted him.

"I have been busy or would have got here earlier," he apologised, seating himself on the arm of her chair, and putting his arm over her shoulder, tilting her head back to kiss her.

"What have you been busy about?" she inquired.

"Talking about going abroad," he replied, which after all was more or less the truth, but not as he meant Joan to understand it.

"How, as a courier again?" The seriousness of his voice startled her.

"No."

"Not—oh, Freddie, with the Army?"

"Yes, and after all, why not? I should have gone before."

"It has not been your fault, they wouldn't let you go from the F.O.," she excused.

"Well, I have been trying to arrange about it to-night," he lied.

"How people will break enough, she said.

"Well, sweet me; so many all the men

"Dearest, it is your duty to

you! But oh, Freddie, it meant it, for curiously it unworthy youth.

it to go, if they will take wiped out, they will need

issuade you; if you feel d you back."

"You are splendid again he kissed her, then: "I came to-night to offer you your freedom, Joan," he said gravely.

"Freddie, what do you mean?"

"I don't think I should hold you to our engagement, when I might get killed or maimed, or something; no man has any right to do that."

"Just as though I would be such a little cad! As though I will not love you all the more because you are going to fight!" she cried indignantly.

"I don't think I could stand it, Joan; the thought of you would unnerve me."

"Look here, Freddie, let us have this thing out; are you tired of me?"

"Good Lord, no!"

"Do you want your freedom?"

"Joan, Joan, how can you even suggest such a thing? I love you too much, but you are so young."

"A very few years your junior."

"Years do not count; you are a child in comparison with me. If I was to get smashed up I could never bear for you to see me; it is not as though you were my wife."

"Would that make a difference?"

"Of course it would; a chap's wife must feel differently towards him to what his fiancée would."

"Then, Freddie, let us get married."

"Joan!"

"I mean it."

"You darling!" He embraced her, grinning to himself over her head, as her face was buried in his shoulder; he had come here to-night to bring about this very crisis.

"When, Joan?"

"Whenever you like."

"To-morrow?"

"Oh, Freddie!" This was indeed sudden; then: "Yes, to-morrow if you like."

"If I like? Good Lord, I should rather think I did like; but your people, my people, they are sure to make a fuss."

"I do not think they will; war weddings are fashionable, you know," she reminded him with a smile.

"I know they will put up trouble"—Freddie spoke despondently—"advise us to wait, and all that bally rot."

"That is for us to decide, not them."

"Look here, Joan, if you really love me enough—"

"You know I do!" reproachfully.

"Then let us bunk off to-morrow and do the trick, without telling a soul, get married, then break the news when it is too late for anyone to interfere."

Any scruples Joan had were cunningly overruled. She pleaded hard that Lady Mary, at least, if not her father as well, should be taken into their confidence. Freddie remained adamant. Before he left her that night he arranged that they were to slip quietly away on the morrow, and get married by special licence. After binding her to solemn secrecy, he kissed her, and wended his way to Berkeley Square, very satisfied indeed at the way he was going to outwit his mother. He and Joan would be safely married before Lady Mary had an opportunity

to warn Lord Sandham. When she found it was too late he was sure she would remain silent.

It was typical of this son of the German Schultz that his last thoughts that night were of Cleo, and not of this fair little bride-to-be.

## CHAPTER XXVI

WHILE her husband and son were busily occupied with their several plans, Lady Mary was finding this evening, following on a most trying afternoon, a veritable nightmare.

Her first uneasiness, after reaching the Shipleys', was her husband's unexplainable absence. It was not a large gathering; only half a dozen people had been invited, and after giving the absent Wellrock ten minutes' grace, Rhoda Shipley refused to wait any longer.

"I would wait if I could, Mary," apologised Mrs. Shipley, "but I am going on to Downing Street, the reception at the Prime Minister's is likely to prove interesting."

"I thought Wellrock too old to adopt the lack of manners affected by the modern youth," the Rodent remarked acrimoniously a little later, in a shrill, penetrating voice, that easily reached Lady Mary's ears.

"It is some great important thing that must keep the good Wellrock from flying to join your company," Monsieur Chalembert flattered his hostess, as he gave her his arm to escort her into the dining-room.

"No doubt we shall hear from Wellrock shortly," Berry Shipley remarked to Lady Mary, as they seated themselves at the table.

"Perhaps he has been unavoidably detained in the city," was all she could suggest, to explain her husband's absence.

The Rodent, in a skin-tight black satin gown, made hideous with patches of her favourite green and scarlet, and wearing a purple ribbon velvet round her yellow scraggy neck, looked execrable as usual. Her clothes

were the subject of much derision, for though she was reported to spend fabulous sums on her attire, she always looked like a crumpled rag bag.

A doggerel quatrain, that was making all London laugh, occurred to her guests to-night as most appropriate. It ran:

"Little '	his plum,
Eyed	,
Goodne	for her clothes,
It mu	

The Rodent  
personality, and

tisfied. Her obnoxious  
made her deservedly the  
best-hated woman in England; but impervious to all dis-  
like and sneers, she went blandly on her way, tearing  
from life all that she most desired, leaving a trail of  
ruined lives in her wake.

It needed all Lady Mary's will power to keep her from rising and abruptly departing, to shake for ever the dust of the Shipleys' house from her feet, but she forced herself to remember her object in remaining on visiting terms with the Shipleys, whom she strongly suspected of disloyalty to England. Distasteful as was the task she had set herself to accomplish, she must learn what she could, and quietly attempt to frustrate any sinister designs that she might become aware of.

Monsieur Chalembert's presence here distressed her. She knew that officially he was not in England—that was easily explainable, and it was natural that he should visit the Shipleys; but she hoped with all her heart that the Frenchman would be guarded with his confidences in this house.

"It is a pity Wellrock does not arrive, I wished to speak with him," Chalembert was remarking to the Rodent, when dessert had been placed on the table, and still no sign came from the banker.

"Perhaps he has reverted to reactionary instincts," shrilled the Rodent, leaning forward, and laughing close up into Chalembert's face.

"Ah, you are optimistic, Madame; you do not anticipate that our friend has had a great fall, then?" replied Chalembert. His hostess laughed heartily.

"Wellrock could never fall far," she dared.

"What a consoling thing that must be for his friends," remarked Lady Mary sweetly.

"You are right," agreed Shipley, "for many would be crushed in his descent."

"After which piece of Dionysian wisdom, we will leave you to break planets into fragments, while we retire to feel artistic and wicked, and bored, and discuss the sinful beauty of decadence." The Rodent rose as she spoke, and the men were left to themselves.

In an incredibly short space of time, Mrs. Shipley was surprised to see her husband and her male guests enter the drawing-room.

"How now?" she cried. "Left alone, have you so soon tired of the company of mediocre workmen, and come to learn from sublime ascetics?"

"Madame, I could believe that illusion was a philosophical doctrine, if you declared it so," vowed Chalembert.

"Illusion is life's twilight sleep," asserted the Rodent.

"Disillusion is vexatious awakening, such as I have this minute received," said Chalembert.

"What has happened to depress you? Are you losing the power of seeing the imperfections of your friends?" asked Mrs. Shipley.

"Mercifully no, I have not yet suffered quite so complete a rupture from the joy of life; but there is to be a gap in my pleasure, for I am summoned from your side." He smiled.

"Wearing an iron mask termed courtesy, I shall smile, as I endeavour to bear this cruel blow, which tears you away, leaving me alone, without an equal."

"It pleases you to mock me. Someone, somewhere, sometime said: 'You are going among women; do not forget your whip.' I will plagiarise and say: 'You are going to meet Mrs. Shipley; do not forget to carry a charm to guard you from her fascinations.'"

"Pittyroid andplash," scoffed the Rodent; "what is calling you away?"

"An urgent message just brought here to me," he explained. "I must fly; I am even more reluctant to depart because I have not seen Wellrock."

"Was it important that you should see him?" The Rodent's eyes became business-like.

"Very."

"Could you not write?"

"An excellent suggestion," he agreed.

"Would you like to go to the library and write your letter?" she asked.

"There is no necessity; I shall just scribble a line in pencil," he replied.

While Chalembert was composing the epistle, Lady Mary bade her hostess good-night, and went upstairs to don her cloak.

"There," she heard Chalembert say, as she descended the stairs, "if you have a trusty messenger, Madame, I would be deeply indebted to you if he might carry this to our dilatory friend."

"Certainly, and at once," replied the Rodent, taking the sealed envelope which he handed her, and touching a bell-push. "Take this to Lord Wellrock at Berkeley Square, immediately," she ordered, giving the servant who appeared in answer to her summons the letter.

"A thousand thanks, and now, dear Madame, good-night." Chalembert bowed gracefully over the hand extended to him by his hostess, then hastily donning his hat and coat, he departed.

For a moment Lady Mary remained on the stairs. That letter—how could she prevent it reaching her hus-

band? He must not get it. Of course this French politician trusted him; he could not suspect that the great Lord Wellrock was a German spy.

Then swiftly she finished her descent of the stairs. Her car had been called, she entered it, the chauffeur waited her instructions before moving on, but it was not until the man to whom Mrs. Shipley had entrusted the letter appeared, running up the basement steps, that she leaned out and said distinctly: "Home, Todd, to Berkeley Square."

"Very good, Milady," replied Todd.

Then: "Wait," she ordered, and calling the messenger servant to the door of her car: "I am going direct to Berkeley Square, I will give that letter to his Lordship," she said calmly, extending her hand for the missive.

"Very good; thank you, Milady," answered the man, handing the envelope to her Ladyship, whom he knew very well by sight as the wife of Lord Wellrock. Touching his hat, the man waited until the car rolled out of sight, then, lighting a cigarette, he strolled off on an hour's jaunt, pleased to have so expeditiously disposed of his task.

Switching off the light that radiated the interior of the car, Lady Mary sat stiffly erect, her lips tightly pursed, her cheeks drawn and held between her teeth until the flesh was ragged and sore.

Now that she had the letter, what was she to do with it? It might possibly be some harmless screed.

Perhaps, after all, she had better take it direct to her husband; or should she destroy it unopened, and risk Wellrock learning that the missive which had been sent him had gone astray? No, that would not do.

Before she could decide what course to pursue, the motor stopped at her old home in Berkeley Square; the footman opened the door of the car; descending, she said:

"That will be all; you may go, Todd."

Quickly the vehicle vanished, leaving her standing on the doorstep.

Kendall, she would go to him, he would advise her. She almost ran through the Square, which was very deserted; as she turned into Berkeley Street, she stopped an empty taxi-cab and drove to 303, Jermyn Street. It was half-past ten when she dismissed the vehicle and asked the porter for Colonel Coolter.

It was when he was descending in the lift, after having taken Lady Mary up to the first floor, where suite No. 2 was situated, that Feidelberg, the night porter, met Mrs. Clarke, returning for the second time that night, this time with a small bag containing her luggage.

"Mary, what on earth has happened to bring you here at this time?" cried Colonel Coolter in amazement.

"This letter, Ken," she told him, holding out the note, in a hand that visibly trembled.

"For me?" he inquired, mystified.

"No, for Wellrock."

"Come and sit down and tell me all about it," he suggested gently, conducting her to a chair.

Rapidly she outlined the events of the evening: "—and here is the letter. Do you think it was a very terrible thing for me to have done?" she finished by inquiring.

"My dear, knowing your wonderfully fine sense of honour as I do, I think it was a noble action; it would, indeed, be a dreadful blow for Chalembert, for our ally France to ever have cause to doubt our integrity, and as you say, a man like Chalembert would never suspect Wellrock of duplicity. Of course, there may be nothing which he could use, and yet, again, we cannot risk it."

"What are you going to do?"

"Open the letter."

"Oh, Ken!"

"I like it as little as you do, but—England first," grimly.

"Yes, yes, you are right, but——"

"But what, Mary?"

"Oh, my dear, I am so sorry to force such tasks on you," she faltered.

"I am sure you are," he consoled her, "just as I regret having to do it. The whole thing is horrible, but remember your own brave words: we must stifle all our own feelings, rise above personal inclinations, and do our duty, stand staunchly by our brave little country, and France as well."

"You are right." A new note of resolution came into her voice. "Open the wretched thing, Ken, and get it over."

"Sounds like a painful operation; in reality that is what it is; well, here is my bistoury." His laugh was hard as he picked up a sharp stiletto which lay on his desk, which ordinarily he used as a paper knife.

"I am not much good at this sort of thing," he admitted, as he inserted the sharp instrument beneath the flap of the envelope.

There was silence as he gently forced the cover open, then drawing forth the sheet of paper, quickly perused the contents.

He read the letter once, and then again; still he said nothing, the watching woman saw his face pale visibly beneath its tan.

"Kendall, what is it?" she asked at length, when the silence became unbearable.

Once more he read the letter, seeming as though he could not believe his senses, he appeared stunned.

"Kendall, tell me, what is the matter?" she begged, terrified at his expression.

"Chalembert, Chalembert, too," he whispered hoarsely.

"Not—" She could not go on, the thought was too nauseating to put into words.

"Yes, a spy, a loathsome traitor. My Christ, is there no one to be trusted?"

"Are you sure?"

"Sure" (she shuddered at his laugh). "Listen." Holding up the hastily-pencilled scrawl, he read:

"DEAR WELLROCK,

"Where are you? You have left us desolate, and a little uneasy.

"I wish to tell you much, which now must wait for another time. But this you must know, that Cleo must have gone to someone else, for Blond has informed me since I saw you this noon that he, too, has received a warning that your son is suspect of \_\_\_\_\_. It has been learned that h-

"Suspicio  
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is better so,  
to write, but  
letter from F  
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nger.  
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rite this with a pencil, it  
destroy it; I do not like  
d I have just received a  
go in haste to Spain. I  
the important question of

"I write from ... s's, so my uneasy thoughts are subdued. Use code 66 to me in Spain. It is better you should leave Cleo to me—I will attend to it that she takes the long journey expeditiously and with quietness.

*Tâche sans tache.*

"Accept my sincere salutations,

"Yours,  
"C."

Neither knew how long the silence that followed the reading of this incriminating document lasted, it was Colonel Cooler who first spoke.

"Chalembert, the famous Chalembert, a spy. It makes one's brain reel to learn that such scum infests the earth," he remarked bitterly. Then, as she did not speak, but sat as though frozen into a white statue, a realisation of what this loyal true woman, who was married to one spy and the mother of another, must be feeling, came to the man who loved her. "Yet to counterbalance such vermin there live noble souls like yourself, Mary; that compensates for a lot," he said.

"Dear heart, I understand." She gave him her hand, while she thanked him more with her eyes than her words.

"Now that we have this knowledge, we must use it. Thank God you and I are true English people, that it is we who have discovered the hideous truth, for we will not hesitate to do our duty to our country."

"You make me ashamed of myself, Mary, but my momentary weakness has passed. It was the shock of the thing that bowled me over; I will take this" (indicating the letter) "and communicate with Torcliffe, my chief."

"Yes," she agreed—then, with an abrupt change, "but no, not yet, I must see this Cleo first."

"What on earth for?"

"To save her, you see what Chalembert says. He is going to have her killed; she must be warned."

"How?"

"I do not know, not yet. Yes, I do, I shall write to her."

"But, my dear Mary, she is a notorious woman, you do not know her."

"Indeed I do, Kendall—she called on me in Paris."

"Cleo called on you!" He was shocked.

"I will explain another time, her object was admirable; now all we must think about is what is best to be done. Could you send a letter direct to her in France for me?"

"Yes, I could manage it," he admitted.

"Then I shall write it now, and it must go at once; at once please, Kendall."

"Certainly, if you wish it," he acceded.

"When?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Good, may I write here?" She walked swiftly to the open desk.

"Yes, here is note-paper."

"Thanks, I will not disturb your correspondence," she promised, pushing a small pile of papers carefully aside.

"Allow me, I will put them out of your way; they are

'rather important private communications Torcliffe handed me to look through to-night. I was busy with them when you came," he explained, as he moved them aside.

"There," announced Lady Mary, after busily writing for a few minutes, "I have asked Cleo to come across to England at once to see me on a most imperative matter, impressing on her of secrecy with regard to her impetuosity. I have given her this address—  
you see, I can't tell you where it is—  
and it might be better if you visit me at Marigold's house."

"I agree, it would be better if you meet her here. Now, is it your desire to postpone moving in until you have seen Cleo?"

"Unless you deem it of supreme urgency, I would rather you waited."

"I do not like postponing the thing, Mary, yet, on the other hand, it would be wiser to wait until Torcliffe comes back. He has had to go to Cardiff to address the dock labourers, but is returning in a couple of days. Such a staunch old loyalist as he will go into this matter like a terrier after rats."

Eventually, a plan of campaign was arranged between them, and Mary stood up to go.

"Good Lord! it is one o'clock," exclaimed Colonel Cooler.

"So it is," she assented. "Ah, well, what does time matter?"

"To be sure, but I would not like anyone to see you leaving at this hour," he asserted, jealous for her reputation.

"Only a sleepy porter saw me come, he does not know me. I do not suppose there will be anyone about at this hour."

"I should not think so; wait until I send the chap for a taxi."

A short time after receiving his order, Feidelberg tapped at the door of No. 2.

"Taxi here, sir," he announced.

"I will drive you home," Kendall said, as they were waiting for the porter to find a cab.

"No, thanks, I would rather you did not," protested Mary.

"Perhaps you are wise." Then, as they heard the taxi was waiting, "I will see you safely on your way," he remarked, following her out and pulling the door closed after him.

Swiftly Feidelberg carried them down in the lift, which had scarcely left the landing before Mrs. Clarke, with a key supplied her by the lift man (who called himself Swiss), had entered Colonel Coolter's room; her lynx eyes lighted on the little pile of official-looking documents. Seizing one, which, from its markings, appeared most important, she perused the contents, trusting to her colleague, Feidelberg, to detain the owner of the room down-stairs, and to give her due warning, by loudly ringing the lift bell, of his return. Mrs. Clarke concentrated her attention on the writings before her, beating the intelligence they contained into her tenacious brain.

By the time the signal came for her to retreat, she was thoroughly cognisant of the wording of some of these private communications. Quickly, noiselessly, she moved from the room; closing the door softly after her, she ran with incredible lightness up the stairs, reaching the upper landing just as the slowly-returning lift deposited Colonel Coolter outside his own door.

As Lady Mary entered the waiting cab, Kendall stood on the step of the vehicle wishing her good-night. Neither of them noted Feidelberg, who had drawn behind a pillar in the dimly-lighted hall to watch and listen.

"Good-night, leave all this to me, try and get some rest," advised Kendall.

"I shall; good-night, and God bless you." Moved by

a feeling of grateful affection, Lady Mary leant forward and pressed her lips to his forehead.

"Thank you, my dear, good-night," he murmured; then stepping down, he closed the door and directed the chauffeur to drive to Eaton Place.

The engine had stopped. Grumbling in an undertone, the chauffeur descended in order to crank up, but all his efforts proved fruitless. Several minutes were spent in examining the spark plug, carburetter, &c., causes for the failure to start his engine.

Kendall saw the window of the

"'Ere, bl—switch off; dip—goin' and doin' a thing like that," at length the cockney chauffeur triumphantly announced, having located the reason of the balking machine.

He was not such a fool as he termed himself. It had been Feidelberg who had thought of this little ruse for delaying the taxi, correctly hazarding that the Colonel would wait to see her Ladyship safely started on her homeward journey.

The trick succeeded, Mrs. Clarke was given sufficient time to gain an entry, and glean some news to carry to her master on the morrow.

The worthy Feidelberg supplied her with a further budget, when later on they met for a whispered confabulation, during which he incited her to demand a higher wage from the wealthy Lord Wellrock.

Mrs. Clarke, wondering if she dared, decided to watch the banker's face when she took him the results of her night's work, and, if conditions appeared favourable, to make the essay.

## CHAPTER XXVII

L ORD SANDHAM motored direct to the Belgravia Hospital, in response to Lady Mary's request that he should come and see her at his earliest convenience.

"Pelham, I do not want Joan to marry Frederick," she stated bluntly after the first greetings were over.

"Why not?" Sandham was naturally taken aback.

"I have gone over this interview a hundred times in my mind, and this is as far as ever I have got, for your question is unbelievably difficult. Can you not trust me, my old friend, and credit me with having your girl's happiness at heart?" she asked wistfully.

"Of that I am sure, but Joan is a wilful young woman, and things have gone a bit far, you know."

"I will never cease to reproach myself for not having foreseen the consequence of letting my boy be so much in Joan's company."

"If I understand you aright, it is of her happiness you are thinking?"

"Yes, oh, yes, indeed."

"Then Master Freddie has been getting into mischief, eh?"

"No—not exactly," she hesitated.

"Come, Mary, surely you can trust me."

"Does that mean I must, before you will interfere?" she asked.

"I do not wish to compel you to do anything against your better judgment, but you see for yourself that were I to go to Joan and order, or ask her to break her engagement, she would demand some reason."

"Could you not tell her she is too young?" feebly suggested Lady Mary.

"Too young, when chits years younger than Joan are taking affairs into their own hands, and marrying, becoming mothers, and divorcees? These times are progressive, the children of to-day disregard their parents, and do as they please," he scoffed.

The upshot of their argument was that Lord Sandham made it quite clear to the harassed woman he must know on what ground desire that his daughter's betrothal to

There set  
mother mus-  
face with he  
help her thro  
hard to bear.

to save sweet Joan, the  
son. She covered her  
prayed for strength to  
as becoming increasingly

"Then if you w  
my son, because—he—is—a spy." The last words were spoken in a whisper.

Lord Sandham stared aghast, hazy thoughts flittered through his brain of rumours that had come to his ears in times gone by regarding the sanity of Wellrock's wife.

"Impossible," burst from his lips at last, "my dear Mary, you cannot mean what you say, that Freddie—your son—oh, it is impossible."

"I wish to God it was." The bitterness with which she spoke arrested Sandham's attention.

"How long have you thought this? What has caused you to think such a thing?"

"I have known it for years."

"Look here, you have been working too hard, and this wretched war is unnerving you, and now that the whole country has spy mania, well—there you are, you see," he wound up disjointedly, for Lady Mary's hands had fallen from her face, the tragedy of her expression startled him.

"No, Pelham, no,"—she was pathetically tired. "We have known one another all our lives. Have I ever shown signs of insanity, although had I done so, I would

have had an excuse, for no woman has had more to burden her than I."

"What do you mean by a spy? Many of our bravest men have been in our secret service."

"Yes, *our* secret service. Frederick belongs to the Germans'."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite."

"Have you spoken to Wellrock?"

"You forget, Wellrock is a German."

"But a loyal one."

"To his own cause, yes."

"But—but I have known him for twenty or thirty years; he was naturalised when he was quite a young man."

"Pelham, believe me or not, will you speak to Joan?" she asked desperately, realising the futility of further talk.

The entrance of a V.A.D. bearing a telegram which she handed Lady Mary, gave Lord Sandham a moment in which to think.

"I will send the reply if any is needed, the messenger need not wait." Lady Mary dismissed the girl.

"I—I—yes, I will see Joan," promised the man; then: "Good God, what is the matter?" he cried, for after opening the telegram and reading, she had fallen back in her chair, her eyes closed, her face deathly white.

"Read, read," she breathed, handing him the message.

"Freddie and I were married this morning, please forgive us. I will write soon. Love. JOAN SCOTT."

was what the astounded nobleman deciphered.

"The young blackguard," he stormed, "I will thrash him within an inch of his life."

"It is too late, too late. My poor little Joan," cried the newly-made mother-in-law.

It was some time before the outraged father could be

brought to see there was now nothing to be done, the young couple had given no address. Even were they traced, the law that had made them man and wife would uphold the husband's rights.

"But if what you tell me is true, Mary, I will not have my daughter living with a German spy," he fumed.

"I have been living with one for over twenty years," she reminded him.

"My poor soul, what hell you must have suffered. I will see this scoundrelly son of yours as soon as I can, and warn him if he tries any of his tricks now that he is my daughter's husband, I will break his rascally neck, but for Joan's sake we must not denounce him," he ended weakly.

"Joan or no Joan, he must be put under careful surveillance; your happiness, Joan's, mine, must not be gained at the sacrifice of our brave men's lives," declared Mary firmly.

"Just so, just so, but we must go cautiously to work," advised Lord Sandham.

"Yes, very cautiously, they are wily; I, who know them so intimately, warn you." She counselled him ere he left in order to try and trace his daughter's whereabouts.

Lady Mary had used a feeble term when she designated Wellrock as "wily." No adjective could adequately describe his cunning. Even as his wife was speaking to Sandham, he was busily conspiring to bring about her ruin and that of the man whom he was hearing from Mrs. Clarke Lady Mary had visited at so late an hour last night.

He listened in silence to Mrs. Clarke's story. Watching him slyly from behind her thick glasses she failed to perceive any change of expression in the immobile mask facing her.

He heard all she had to say, making her repeat all the information she had gleaned from a perusal of Colonel Coolter's papers; these contained instructions pertaining

to plans for fresh coastal defences, the disposition of new guns, and their calibre.

He also learned the hour his wife arrived, at what time she left, of the kiss she had parted from Colonel Coolter with. Then:

"Is that all?" he asked.

"Yes, Milord."

"Good morning." She was dismissed.

Such was the man's power that she reached the door without daring to put into execution her determination to ask for more money; then she halted.

"Feidelberg will want payment," she faltered.

"Feidelberg is paid," he snapped back.

Mrs. Clarke hastily vanished without another word.

Methodically he set to work with unabated energy. A messenger had already been despatched to Switzerland bearing a carefully constructed and cunningly concealed code message which was to be conveyed by devious ways to a Personage in Germany, stating that letters arriving addressed to Major Hillrose were to be expected and addressed to Sholberg Camp; they were to be watched for, and taken direct to a certain General, head of the German Secret Service in Berlin, for they would contain useful information.

Directly Mrs. Clarke left him, he telephoned through to Marigold, telling her that Dickie had been traced to Sholberg Camp, she could write to him, and later, he (Lord Wellrock) would call and despatch the letter for her, and give her the address, so that she might send him parcels. If she could lend him one of Dickie's old letters he would like her to do so; in case there was any question of his identity when his letters began to come through, the comparison of his old handwriting with the future letters might help expedite her receipt of them.

"Yes," he told her, in answer to her excited request to be allowed to send such a letter to him at once, in order that there should be no delay. "It might be as well; of

course I do not know what the regulations are, my dear Marigold, but such a letter may be useful."

This epistle was forwarded to Germany, giving information as to the writer, his age, habits, relatives; number, names and ages of his children, every little detail that the missing Dickie, were he alive, might have written about. His handwriting was to be closely copied in letters the pseudo Major Hillrose wrote to his wife, or any other person.

Under cover of Marigold's first envelope addressed to "Major Hillrose" at Sholberg, went an epistle from Wellrock with his stepdaughter's letter. In it his Lordship verbosely expressed sympathy and affection, according to the strict dictionary interpretation of the words used. In reality it supplied all his lately acquired intelligence, gleaned by Mrs. Clarke from Colonel Coolter's private papers, also instructions ordering the immediate payment by cheque of ten thousand pounds endorsed with Colonel Coolter's signature (a copy of which he, Wellrock, had sent them) into Colonel Coolter's account at a certain bank in a neutral country; one of their agents residing there could arrange the matter.

Gustav Lemberg, Mrs. Clarke's husband, it was whom Wellrock requisitioned to pen three incriminating documents to the Secret Service authorities in Whitehall, warning them that Colonel Coolter was playing a double game and should be watched. Each letter appeared to have been written by an entirely different person.

On top of these warnings came the German papers, which in some way best known to Wellrock and his colleagues in Berlin had received an item of news delineating the new coastal defences which England proposed preparing.

The leakage of the information caused a grave commotion in Whitehall. Colonel Coolter was known to have the matter of these defences in hand. He was keenly distressed, and evidently mystified as to how the Germans

could have gained their knowledge. He immediately wired to Cardiff to his Chief, and received a reply from Torcliffe, who said he would wait until his return to London before going into the matter.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

**S**ICK with worry, Kendall could do nothing but wait; in the meantime Cleo, in answer to Lady Mary's request, arrived in England.

The train by which she travelled from Folkestone reached Charing Cross between eight and nine o'clock. Cleo, securing a taxi, drove direct to the address which Lady Mary had given her, 303, Jermyn Street, where Feidelberg, who had just come on duty, answered her inquiries for Lady Mary Wellrock.

"Not 'ere? Then it may be 'er Ladyship is out to 'er dinner. I will leave for 'er a letter," declared Cleo, and entering the porter's office, she wrote a line, saying she had come as requested, and would return later. This epistle she addressed to Lady Mary Wellrock, Flat No. 2, 303, Jermyn Street, and sealing it securely, entrusted it to the night porter, who sliding it prominently in the rack, promised to deliver it.

Half an hour later, when Kendall, tired and dispirited, returned to his chambers, in glancing mechanically at the letter-rack, he espied the document bearing Lady Mary Wellrock's name.

"Hand me that letter; I will give it to her Ladyship," he ordered. Silently Feidelberg obeyed.

On entering his rooms, Kendall telephoned to the Belgrave Hospital. When he heard Lady Mary's voice at the other end of the line he told her of the letter, expressing the opinion that it was from Cleo, and suggested sending it to her.

"No, open it and tell me what she says," decided Mary. "It is from Cleo," Colonel Coolter explained over the line to the attentive woman; "she is staying at the 'Ritz,'

and will await a message from you; her time is limited; she expresses a hope that you will see her as soon as possible."

"Will you ring through and ask her to come over to your rooms at once, and I will join you immediately?" promised Mary.

The meeting between the women typified the drastic change that had taken place in the social outlook on life; the war had levelled these two; they met with a firm, quiet hand-shake, such as good comrades with a mutual respect for one another might have exchanged.

The mutation did not occur to either of them; they were possessed of the one desire in common, to outwit an enemy, to defeat that foe's machiavellian agents.

Lady Mary the aristocrat and Cleo the actress were loyal women fighting for their countries; this was the common ground on which they met.

"It is good of you to have come so quickly, Ma'mselle," said Lady Mary.

"I am pleased if I can serve you, Madame."

"Your life is in danger," Mary came direct to the point.

"*Ma foi*, that is no new thing!" laughed the adventuress lightly. "What is it I have done now?"

"Denounced a spy," stated the Englishwoman.

"That also is possible."

"Do you find so many?" asked Kendall.

"I 'ave a *flair* for findin' them," she evaded the question.

"You are guarded, Ma'mselle," remarked Colonel Coolter.

"Then I am wise, is it not so?" she asked smilingly.

"Do you not trust us?" he asked.

"*Au contraire*, otherwise I would not be 'ere; but I do not know 'ow much or 'ow leetle you and Madame know," she explained.

"And so you fear to hurt me, Ma'mselle?" Mary spoke gently.

"That I would not do, if I could 'elp it, Madame."

"And yet it was my son you proclaimed as a traitor."

"So you know? Poor Madame!"

"You do not deny it?"

"But no, for it is true."

"You are sure?" Kendall asked the question.

"Of a certainty; I regret that 'er Ladyship should learn, though."

"What did you expect would happen?" It was still the man who questioned.

"Oh," Cleo shrugged her shoulders expressively, "I think maybe they would shoot 'im," she said calmly.

"You can say that when you have just declared a reluctance to hurt her Ladyship?"

"If 'er son, 'e 'appened to meet with such a—*eh bien*, such an accident abroad, it would not 'urt 'er Ladyship so much as to find out 'e was not a patriot," stated Cleo definitely. She said nothing of her endeavour to save Freddie by warning him to keep away from France; despite her reluctance to wound this Englishwoman, a spy is a spy, and had it been her own brother she would have shown no mercy.

"You are right," brusquely declared Mary; "but the impeachment of this spy has endangered your life."

"Yairs," drawled Cleo, "very likely is 'e looking to keel me."

"No, not Frederick."

"Ah, 'is father, *sans doute*."

"You also know about my—about Lord Wellrock?" asked Mary.

"But yairs. I 'ave always known that 'is Lordship was a German agent; but I am grieved to know that Madame, too, 'ave find it out."

"It is no news to me; I have suspected it for years," confessed Lady Mary.

"An' Wellrock 'e is so clevaire," marvelled Cleo. "But me, I, too, am clevaire; 'e think 'e use me, but the little

spy, one I am, me, I use the great Wellrock all the time; an' now 'e wish to keel me, yairs?"

"Not Wellrock, but Chalembert," stated Kendall.

"*Qui donc, 'oo* is it you say?" demanded the French-woman.

"Monsieur Pierre Chalembert," he repeated.

"Oh, no, Monsieur, you mistake; Chalembert 'e is my compatriot, 'e is a good friend with me, this is a *bêtise* that you make."

"Unfortunately it is a fact."

"That Chalembert wish me some 'arm? No, no, why should 'e do that?"

"Because you know too much."

"Yairs, I know much, but I learn it all for France; I tell all for my country."

"The very reason why he wishes to dispose of you," explained Coolter.

"Monsieur, you insult France when you say such a wickedness," blazed Cleo.

"I felt as you do, when I first realised that he was a traitor," admitted Kendall.

"'E is no traitor; you commit a big foolishness when you say such a word with the name of Pierre Chalembert." Cleo was magnificent in her genuine indignation.

"Unless we were quite sure of it, we would not say such a thing," interpolated Mary.

"How is it you know it? Some one 'as tell you, yairs?"

"We have indubitable proof," Coolter assured her.

"It is not so, it is lies and some more lies, and yet again lies, lies, lies, I tell you!" her voice rising sharply.

"Ma'mselle, why should I send for you to tell you this thing if it was not true?" asked Mary.

"I do not know." The fiery little Frenchwoman's expression spoke volumes.

"Ah, you distrust Colonel Coolter and myself, you think we are deceiving you, maligning your countryman to gain something, perhaps to protect my son?"

"Perhaps," agreed Cleo defiantly.

"You have no right to say such a thing!" declared Kendall sternly.

"Hush, she has every right; her faith in her countryman is admirable. Will you listen to me?" Mary asked her.

"I will listen, yairs," her tone was uncompromising. In stony silence she attended to the Englishwoman's recital.

"And now, Kendall, will, you give Ma'mselle the letter M. Chalembert wrote? Let her read it for herself," Mary directed.

Cleo accepted the document handed her in silence; in silence she perused it, turning it back and re-reading it, submitting the letter to the closest scrutiny; then springing to her feet she demanded in the tone of an inquisitor:

"Madame, you are to be trusted; will you swear to me what you say is true?"

"I swear it," Lady Mary's grave voice carried conviction.

"This letter, it is *vraiment* wrote by Pierre Chalembert?"

"Yes."

The overwhelming, iniquitous truth was borne in on the Frenchwoman's brain; her emotion overcame her; with bitter acerbity she cursed Chalembert. At first her words came slowly and through gritted teeth; gradually increasing in volubility and power as she proceeded.

"Come, come, Ma'mselle, cursing may relieve your feelings but it will do no good," Colonel Coolter reminded her roughly; his words had the desired effect of stopping Cleo's flow of language.

"You are right, *alors*, me I now bid you adieu," she declared.

"Where are you going?" he inquired.

"To Spain."

"But Chalembert is there," Lady Mary reminded her.

"*Bien sûr*, that is why I go."

"It is unwise; Chalembert is a dangerous enemy. You would not be safe," objected Kendall.

"What is life or safety to me?" she asked fiercely. "Is it only you 'oo love your country enough to risk your life, to give 'im your limb, yairs? No, I tell you, no; for me, too, I would be proud to die for my beautiful France. I must go quick to Spain to see what that *cochon* 'e is doing. Do not fear for me," she added, more gently, "I will be one more than is good for 'im."

"Can we not do something to protect you? If you will wait, I will go quietly to some of my influential friends, and ask them to have you guarded," promised Mary.

"I thank you, Madame; no, I will look after me myself. I regret that I think at first you tell me lies; it is 'ard to learn someone you trusted is one complete devil."

"You are right," agreed Mary slowly.

For a moment the two women looked deep into each other's eyes in mutual pitying sympathy.

"*Pauvre Madame*," said Cleo, slipping her little, claw-like hand into Mary's white slender one. "My 'eart, it has always bleed for you. Can you not tell Freddie 'e is suspect, and must go away to the country to live quiet? For I tell you, that if 'e come again to France, 'e will nevaire come back alive, and I tell you some more also: if I know Freddie come to France I cannot keep quiet, no, not even for you."

"I have tried to speak to my son; I think he has known what I wished to say, for he would not listen. I understand your feelings, and would not expect you to act in any other way than you have done regarding him. I feel I should have taken a stronger stand in the matter, but it is a painful task to denounce one's own son, even so I have tried to warn Sir Martin Blackett about—"

"'Oo you say?" demanded Cleo shrilly.

"Sir Martin Blackett, he is my son's chief."

"*Mon Dieu*, Madame, 'e is one big scoundrel, 'e is the

big friend to Wellrock; you 'ave not told 'im something, yairs?"

"God in heaven, is the whole country riddled with Germany's spies?" cried Kendall.

"No, no, be tranquil, Monsieur," Cleo in her turn counselled. "You 'ave not so many spies 'ere; you think you 'ave because you begin to find these few yellow English out. It is a pity you are so slow, yairs, for they do much 'arm, these yellow ones, 'oo say they are English, only to gain your confidence; 'oo come and live 'ere and become *naturaliser, et avec ruse contre ruse* trick and deceive, *au dehors souris au dedans sournois*, yairs, their outsides is gentle, but insides they are of a yellow *incroyable*, it give to me the *jaunisse* to rest my thoughts on these yellow ones. You trust like big infants, but one day you will see it is a great foolishness to be so gentle, and so trusting, then zip! ping! you shoot them all dead like buttons, and win the war, then you smile so 'appy and content and" (her shoulders went up in an inimitable shrug) "you go to your sleeps some more *sans doute*."

Despite the tragedy of it all, Kendall smiled at her vivacious and graphic description.

"Have you known Sir Martin Blackett for long? Are you sure of what you say?" inquired Mary.

"Am I sure? *Ma foi!* I know 'im like I know my nose; for twenty years I know 'im; 'e is a bad one, that Blackett. If you 'ave said something to 'im, you must be careful, like you tell me to be, for 'e will tell Wellrock what 'e knows, and those two they will put their 'eads together like this" (placing the index fingers of either hand side by side) "to make trouble for you."

"But hang it all, Ma'mselle, if you have known these men, Blackett, Wellrock, and God knows who besides, to be German spies, why have you not denounced them long ago to your own people?" asked Colonel Coolter desperately.

"We in France know much, but we can do little with the subjects of our Allies; we 'ave our ways; you 'ave

your ways; we 'elp you and you 'elp us, yairs, but you must not interfere with us, and we do not interfere with you. It is better so, for then we remain friends. But I tell you, one day some strong man will fight 'is way to the top of the wall, in the struggle 'e will lose 'is coat and 'is *gilet*, and 'e will throw away 'is so nice white gloves of kid; with the sleeves of 'is chemise rolled up—'e will *cracher* on 'is 'ands, and there standing 'igh up like one inspired 'e will speak 'ard words with 'is mouth, crrrack, crrrack! like the lash of a whip; 'e will strike out the traitors, and give back to the English their England. *Voilà*, me, Cleo, I feel in my bones that this will be so."

"God grant your prophecy may soon be realised," prayed Lady Mary fervently.

"Now, Mademoiselle, if you are determined to go to Spain, can I be of any assistance in the way of helping you with the necessary passports?" asked Coolter.

"No, it is better I arrange myself, you will 'ave much to do 'ere, to fight against the 'arm these yellow English ones do."

"Yellow English, by Jove! you have hit it, that is what these curs are. I will have them impeached and chuck'd out," decided Kendall.

"Ha, ha," it was a jeering laugh, "you think it will be easy, that you can go to someone and say, 'This man 'e is a spy,' and that someone you tell will kill the spy, or take away the power from this false one to do 'arm. You 'ave much to learn, Monsieur, if it was some *garçon, coiffeur*, or peasant, yairs, it may be easy to do, but with Wellrock, and Blackett, and Shipley, for Shipley we all know is the paid tool of Germany, you will 'ave a 'ard task. They are clevaire, oh, very clevaire, they learn secrets, and in many ways get people in their power, so that these indiscreet ones must protect them. You will find that the German agents, one must fear, are not so easy to be what you call 'chuck out.'"

"I shall try at all events," Kendall declared firmly.

"Then you will 'ave to be well on your guard, it is

necessaire you sleep with an eye open all the time, it is like you would take the moon in your teeth. And now I go to find what this Chalembert, this *bête noire*, 'e is busy with, 'e will not know I 'ave learn of 'is wickedness, 'e will not be on the *qui vive* for me, *voilà*, I go."

When Cleo had gone, Colonel Coolter walked with Mary across St. James's Park to Eaton Place, where he left her at the door.

Neither of them thought of the letter Cleo had written earlier in the evening; it was left lying unnoticed on the desk in Kendall's room, where the prying Mrs. Clarke found and purloined it for Lord Wellrock.

## CHAPTER XXIX

THE letters which Gustav Lemberg had written at Lord Wellrock's command to Whitehall, combined with the leakage of secret news, began to cause Colonel Coolter inexpressible distress.

No one who knew him doubted his loyalty, yet the thing was a mystery.

An inquiry was held, at which the Duke of Shadforth acted as Colonel Coolter's friend.

Kendall could throw no light on the enigmatical situation; he swore that the papers had not left his possession, neither had he divulged their contents to a living soul.

With an effort, he controlled his indignation on being asked if he had ever received money from a German source. His denial to this suggestion was given with great emphasis.

"No," he answered, when asked if he ever had dealings with such and such a bank in a neutral country, repeating the monosyllable when asked if he was sure that he had no money lying to his credit there.

He was faintly amused when so enormous a sum as ten thousand pounds was intimated.

"Yes, that looks like my signature," he hesitated, frowning at the slip of paper that was placed before him.

"Then," asked his questioner, reversing the oblong slip, "how do you account for this, Colonel Coolter?"

Stupefied, Kendall realised that he was looking at a cheque for ten thousand pounds made payable to Kendall A. Coolter. Dimly he comprehended that the form bore the printed name of a German bank.

"Is . . . this . . . mine?" he queried dazedly.

"That is what we wish you to tell us," he was informed with asperity.

"It . . . is . . . my God"—the hideous truth suddenly overwhelmed him—"it is a German cheque paid in in my name."

"Correct."

"And my signature endorsing it."

"Ah, that is your signature, then?"

"It looks . . . Philip, what is the meaning of this?" he beseeched the Duke of Shadforth despairingly.

"Some ghastly mistake, Coolter," declared Philip, his face grave and white.

"Why, I never possessed as much money as this at one time in my life," cried the distracted man.

"You are not wealthy?" he was asked.

"I have a bare five hundred a year beside my pay," he answered mechanically.

And so the inquiry dragged on its slow and damning course.

The Duke of Shadforth, after closely scrutinising the signature on the back of the cheque, requested the attendance of the manager and paying clerk's from the English bank where Colonel Coolter kept his account.

The manager gave it as his opinion that the writing submitted to him on the back of the cheque had been penned by Colonel Coolter. The two clerks, on the contrary, declared they would not have passed this as being genuine, pointing out minute differences which none but an expert eye could detect.

At last the inquiry ended. It was only due to the excellent services he had rendered his country that Colonel Coolter escaped with a reprimand. Later it was unofficially hinted to him that he would be well advised to send in his papers.

The strain of his trial, coming so soon on his return from a life of discomfort and hardships in France, allied to the operation on his limb, proved too much for Ken-

dall. His medical adviser ordered him to take a long sea voyage, if he wished to save his reason.

Too heart-sick and weary to care what became of him, the broken man allowed himself to be persuaded by his staunch friends to follow the doctor's advice. Thus it was that he heard nothing of the unpleasant rumours afloat relative to the Wellrock divorce, for he was well on his way to Australia when the gossip began to percolate the ears of society.

For months the rumour remained as such. It wafted to Marigold in the midst of her chimeric happiness, and although she indignantly denied there was any truth in the report, it caused her a spasm of uneasy apprehension, and she looked for an opportunity of consulting Lord Wellrock on the subject. This contingency occurred when he came to speak to her about a parcel he was sending to Germany to Major Hillrose.

"How splendid of you, Father Frederick. You really are wonderfully kind. It is most thoughtful of you to send Dickie warm clothes: he so appreciates all you are doing. Every letter I receive from him, he sends messages or notes to you," she said, sincere gratitude ringing through her words.

"I know he does, Marigold, the dear chap," he said, not deeming it necessary to tell her that into the warm tweed clothing exported had been carefully woven lengthy messages, in dots and dashes used in the Morse code, which, when translated in Germany by the false Major Hillrose, gave the enemy, amongst other pieces of information, valuable intelligence relative to the disposition of English Dreadnoughts. Also warning them as to impending changes in England.

"Dickie is not allowed to write long letters: not that I am complaining," she hastily added. "I am too happy at knowing he is alive, and comparatively well looked after. The money I send enables him to procure comforts, and I owe you a great debt of gratitude for tracing him."

"Now that his head is better, he would have written in any case," protested Wellrock.

"The poor darling, I suppose he would. He must have got an awful blow," she sighed.

"Ah, well, he is better now. If you will write a letter, and address this label to him, I will enclose the one and attach the other. He will be better pleased at seeing your handwriting."

"You are so thoughtful," she thanked him softly.

"And now, Father Frederick, I want to talk to you about something else," she said a little later, after writing her letter and addressing the baggage label.

"Certainly, what is it?"

"Some horrid gossip I heard about you and Mammie. Do you know, it is actually rumoured that you and she are going to be divorced?"

"What did your mother say?"

"I have not spoken to her on the matter. I did not want to worry her: she has been looking so ill and wretched for some time."

"Have you ever wondered why she is so wretched?" asked Wellrock sternly.

"Y . . . yes, I supposed it was the war," she ended lamely.

"No, my dear child, it is not the war. I, too, am unhappy, although you have failed to perceive it. For years my heart has been sore and heavy. . . ."

"Oh, Father Frederick!" Marigold's heart was touched: her warm sympathy leapt to this usually taciturn man.

"I am not making a bid for pity. All I ask is that you should not judge harshly; whatever happens, remember your mother and I are only frail humans. Whatever course I pursue, do not leap to hasty conclusions. In the long run, it will lead to your mother's happiness, and that, my dear Marigold, has been the one object of my life."

He left his step-daughter increasingly puzzled. As to

her honest opinion of him, her gratitude in that he had been the first to trace Dickie's whereabouts was the preponderating feeling, and even through the trying time which followed, some months later, when Wellrock actually sued for a divorce from her mother, she did not quite lose this sense.

Lady Mary had suffered so much that this fresh ignominy had not the power to wound her as it might have done a few years earlier.

When she first heard of Wellrock's purpose, she announced her intention of allowing the case to go undefended, but yielding to Marigold's pleading, she instructed Counsel and cabled to Kendall, who was cited as co-respondent. He replied immediately from Australia to the effect that he would return to England at once. This he attempted to do.

That his absence was due to a sharp attack of typhoid fever, which he contracted on the voyage, Mary did not learn for many months later, for his illness necessitated his removal from the ship to a hospital at one of the ports, where he lay in a delirium between life and death for long weary weeks.

Public sympathy throughout the case swayed in Wellrock's direction. The evidence against his wife was very strong.

Her close friendship with the co-respondent was well known. The trusting husband had suspected no evil, having sublime faith and implicit trust in his wife. It was only when he was forced to it that he could believe she was untrue to him.

Countless witnesses were called: servants who had been dismissed from the house by Lady Mary years ago, lied with wonderful calmness of things they swore occurred during their residence in Berkeley Square. They also spoke of her Ladyship's unnatural attitude towards her only son.

Mrs. Clarke's name was not mentioned. Lord Wellrock had decided against her giving evidence. Her work

of spying on Colonel Coolter at an end, she had obeyed her master's instructions and returned to Anne's services.

Feidelberg, the night porter at Jermyn Street, where the co-respondent resided when in London, proved a most incriminating witness. He told of Lady Mary's visits to these chambers late at night, the embrace and kisses which he took an oath to having seen, also the letters and visitors she was in the habit of receiving there; as proof of the former, the envelope left by Cleo for the co-respondent was produced. All went against the unfortunate woman. Her friendship with the notorious French actress caused a buzz of condemnatory wonderment even among her most loyal supporters.

With apparent reluctance, Lord Wellrock admitted having known of this undesirable friendship many years ago. He attested to appealing to his wife to break with such an unworthy companion. Her reply had been to invite the Frenchwoman to a social gathering at her own home to meet Royalty.

Halfway through the trial, Lady Mary abandoned the contest, and Lord Wellrock was granted his divorce.

When Kendall eventually returned to England, a mere shadow of his former self, he was dissuaded from following out his intention of reopening the case by Mary herself.

"No, no, Kendall, it is useless. I could not bear to listen again to the terrible things I heard in Court. I grieve for you, my poor friend, for I know how this had made you suffer, but still more do I feel our powerlessness to bring his treason to England home to him, for now whatever you or I said, would be scoffed at as an attempt to revenge ourselves on him for having dragged our names through the mire."

"It shall be as you wish, Mary, but now that you are free, my dear . . ."

"Don't, Kendall, please don't," she interrupted hastily.  
"Never?" he asked wistfully. "Well, whether you

marry me or not, I will devote the rest of my life to you, if you will accept such a servitor as I, minus an arm, minus a character. . . .”

“You hurt me when you talk like that, Kendall. Those reasons are in your favour rather than the reverse, the one you lost in brave fight, the other has been smirched by Wellrock. I am convinced that he was instrumental in arranging the incriminating evidence against you at your trial, in fact, I firmly believe he was at the bottom of the whole affair.”

“By God, I would willingly give the rest of my life to actually prove that.”

“If ever Wellrock is publicly proclaimed a spy, conclusively proven to be what he is, then, Kendall, I will marry you and go away to try and forget these hideous years,” she promised solemnly. “But he is so astute, and as Cleo sapiently remarked, there are so many people, loyal enough in their feeble way, who prefer for their own sakes to believe that he and Shipley and Blackett are trustworthy, that I fear no power can bring them to book,” she sighed.

“The downfall of these treacherous hounds must come, and when Wellrock is denounced, I will claim the fulfilment of that promise, my dear, my very dear.” He lifted her hand, and, holding it to his lips, kissed it several times before releasing it.

Lord Sandham was one of the many who stood staunchly by Lady Mary during the trial. He was among those who openly refused to place any credence in the evidence that was attested against her, delighting in publicly cutting Wellrock. His dislike of his son-in-law had increased; he found it difficult to display even formal civility to Freddie on the few occasions when they met, which were mainly when the nobleman called on his daughter.

Joan was deeply distressed on hearing of the divorce. She truly loved Lady Mary, and wrote very sweetly to her, although her husband had autocratically forbidden

her to do so. Had the young wife been in London she would have further defied her lord and master and gone to see her mother-in-law, but Joan was living in the country, in anticipation of becoming a mother. London, with its air raids, was not considered a safe place for her to await the birth of her child.

Freddie ignored his mother, siding indignantly with his father.

Calling on Marigold with a commission from Joan, he spoke to her on the subject.

"Pretty rotten this case," he remarked, after delivering his wife's message.

"Yes, poor mother," sympathised Marigold.

"Oh, I don't know—she seems to have played it pretty low down on all of us," grumbled Freddie.

"Hold your tongue," blazed his step-sister. "I think your father must be mad or bad or both to bring such cruel charges against my angel mother."

"Come off it, Marigold, not much of an angel about her, judging from the evidence."

"You little cad, Freddie, have you no decency to talk about your own mother like that? She is a saint, and all these people are telling lies. I verily believe you and your father know it, and now go, and never speak to me again," she ordered heatedly.

"Right oh, if that is the way you look at it, but I don't intend letting Joan have anything more to do with her, and that is flat," was his parting shot as he picked up his cap and left with more speed than dignity, in order to avoid the scorn and rage with which Marigold turned on him.

All this time there had been no word of Cleo. Several times Lady Mary thought about her, and hoped she was safe.

Vague, disquieting rumours filled the air. Every belligerent country seemed to be going through a stage of spy fever and internal unrest. England was feeling the disgusted amazement at atrocities committed by Germans

that an honest, simple schoolboy might experience on coming in contact with a cheat.

The conception of sin, brutality and degeneracy which was the German instrument of domination had roused the civilised world against them. The Teuton preaching of hate could not be inculcated in British hearts, only a slowly-wakened determination had taken possession of the latter and their allies. German rule must never be allowed to prevail, otherwise the world would be as a place overrun with foul weeds where there would be no room for beautiful flowers and healing herbs. Then these weeds must be stamped out. So like good gardeners, in no ecstasy of delirium, with no thirst for revenge, they set themselves resolutely to work to destroy that which was evil. Steadily, calmly they gave their lives to the task, their blood watered the ground, to bring beauty and peace once more to the world.

In face of these nobly sacrificed lives, the non-combatant portion of the population began to bestir themselves uneasily. They, too, must do their share in the great task; the enemy that still dwelt in their midst must be revealed with no deference to position, power, or money. The nation as with one voice made this demand, and, hearing it, many traitors and their protectors were seized in the cold grip of uneasy apprehension.

## CHAPTER XXX

ANNE RAYMOND had been one of Lord Wellrock's most sincere sympathisers during the trying days of the divorce. She experienced a burning scorn of Lady Mary, and wondered what species of woman this could be who could treat so noble a man as the charitable banker in such a scurilous way.

It was the precocious Patty Palmer, now an exceedingly attractive maiden in her teens, who broached the subject to Anne and her sister June as they were walking to Baker Street from Grosvenor Square.

"I am jolly sorry for Lady Mary Wellrock, who has just been divorced," stated Patty decidedly.

"Oh, Patty, you ought not to read such cases," reproved June.

"Why are you sorry for her?" asked Anne.

"Because Terry met Lady Mary several times and said she was perfectly sweet, so her son must take after his father," reasoned Patty.

"Did you know the son?" asked Anne in surprise.

"We *did*." The emphasis on the last word was marked.

"I never knew that," commented Anne. "What is he like?"

"We knew him years ago. Terry brought him to stay when we had a bungalow at Pangbourne," June explained.

"Is he nice?" asked Anne.

"Not at all," from June. Patty sniffed disdainfully.

"What was he like?" persisted Anne.

"A rotter," Patty answered bluntly.

"Patty, what terrible words you use! Why do you say such things?" upbraided her sister.

"Because I am honest, my dear June. You have good looks, Anne has personality, I have only my honesty, plus intelligence," retorted Patty pertly, whereat the other two laughed.

"Well, the son cannot resemble his father, for Lord Wellrock is . . ." what she was going to say the sisters never heard, for with a squeal of delight Patty interrupted:

"Terry!" she cried. "Look, there is our own blessed Terry, waiting outside your door, Anne. He has got a bad attack of you," she teased. "Well, I am jolly glad you are going to be our sister-in-law. Oh, look at Anne blushing!" she laughed, as she broke into a run in order to reach her sailor brother the sooner.

"Now clear off, kid; I want to talk to Anne," Terry ordered his sisters, after an hour spent in Anne's sitting-room.

"And when he tells us how beautiful you are, we'll never believe him, we'll never believe him," chanted Patty mischievously, as she walked towards the door, nimbly dodging a well-aimed cushion hurled at her by her brother.

"Someone was asking after you, Patty," he called after her.

"Who?" Her head popped round the door again.

"Bennie Saintleigh," he told her.

"Who is blushing now?" crowed Anne.

"He is quite a nice little boy," commented Patty, with an attempt at diffidence which her face of flaming scarlet belied.

"How strange you should mention young Saintleigh just now," remarked Anne, when she and Terry were alone.

"Why?" he inquired.

"Because we were just talking about his sister's husband."

"Scott, the bounder? He is a rotter, if ever there was one," Terry spoke contemptuously.

"So Patty said. I am sorry for his father."

"I do not know Wellrock, but Saintleigh seems to think father and son are tarred with the same brush."

"Oh, no, indeed, they cannot be, for Lord Wellrock is a splendid man," quickly championed Anne.

"I did not know you knew him, Anne."

"Oh . . . yes," the ready blood mounted to her face. She had always felt a little awkwardness on this subject since she had been engaged to Terry. True to her promise to Wellrock, it was the one secret she had kept from her lover.

"What is the mystery, darling?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing, at least nothing much; let us talk about you. What did you mean when you wrote and told me you had something to tell me?"

"Yes, I had." Terry, noting Anne's evident embarrassment, did not press his inquiry. "It was about Tim Ryan."

"Poor little Tim, I was terribly distressed at hearing of his death; he met with an accident, didn't he?"

"Yes," grimly, "it broke me up. I was jolly fond of Timmy."

"I can scarcely believe he is dead, he was so merry and happy, so full of life, poor boy."

"We all loved that youngster. The whole ship grieved over his . . . accident."

"How did it happen, Terry?"

"He killed himself."

"Terry! Whatever made him do it?"

"The same reason that caused poor old Douglas to pass in his checks."

"Did Douglas . . . ?" she could not finish the question.

"Yes, Anne, both of those poor chaps killed themselves."

"Why?"

"Some swine had got hold of them, found out they

were hard up, loaned them money, then tried to get information from them. When the boys refused, they were threatened with exposure, so they ended things," Terry explained tersely.

"I don't quite understand; tell me more clearly," Anne begged.

"Poor darling! I should have been more careful how I broke it to you. Of course you knew them both, didn't you?"

"Very well indeed; they always came to see me when they were on leave."

"Yes; Timmy had a photograph of you in his cabin. I tried to sneak it, but he would not let me have it. His 'Ray of Sunshine,' he called you. His end broke me up," he reiterated.

"Terry, Ralph Blaikie, he, too . . . met with an accident; could it have been the same?" she asked.

"I believe so. I only knew Blaikie slightly, but these other two . . . well, Timmy left me a letter, telling me things. It's a beastly business."

"Let me hear all about it."

"Another time, Anne. You look knocked out," he commiserated.

"No, now, Terry, now, now! I feel as though I must know now," she commanded.

"I had better read you what he said, then," he consented reluctantly, drawing a case from his pocket and extracting the dead boy's letter; with a sickening sense of apprehension Anne sat mutely listening.

"DEAR TERRY" (ran the letter),

"When you read this I shall have gone West! Sorry, old sport, I had to do it. I don't so much care for myself, but the people will feel it. I hope they won't hear what really happened. Let them think it was an accident, like Ronnie's and Ralph and poor old Doug, and God knows who else besides. The reason I am writing to you is because you are a sensible sort of chap, and might be able to think up some way that will save others from making such blasted

fools of themselves as I have done. It started five years ago, when I was a youngster. I remember the very week, for one thing because it was my nineteenth birthday, and another reason was because I had only just met 'Ray of Sunshine.' She was jolly kind to me, and I found myself pouring all my woes into her sympathetic ear. My 'woes' were nothing more or less than debt. I owed about £60. I always was an extravagant beast; never could think about money; well, old son, it didn't worry me much. I knew I would pay it somehow, but soon after I came back to the ship, I had a most inviting document positively begging of me to accept a loan. I chucked the thing away and forgot it. Then another one came, and I thought I would answer it just for the fun of the thing.

"Ping presto! back came twenty quid; not a cheque, but nice, rustly crisp five-pound notes, four of them.

"I thought the johnny who sent them must have been a bit of an ass to hurl his dibs about so recklessly, and stuffed them in my pocket, meaning to send them back and tell him so; but of course I forgot and spent the stuff. I signed the paper that had been enclosed with the cash and sent it back to the address given.

"A few weeks later another tanner arrived; this time I did send it back, and wrote a stiffish letter saying I would repay the twenty quid as soon as I could.

"The answer I got to that was a wounded wail, saying that he (the sender) had not asked for the twenty back, and a lot more to the same effect, and again enclosing the tanner, which this time I kept, and wrote thanking Mr. Gregor MacGregor, as he signed himself.

"And so things went on, fivers and tenners arriving now and then. I gave up sending them back and just let things slide in my blamed silly way.

"One day when I was playing round at Old Bailey's in Portsmouth, a chap got into conversation with me, and we yarnted a lot. He seemed to know me all right. I didn't bother asking him his name, although after that I used to see him quite often, and we always used to have a chin-wag.

"Then this merry old breeze with Germany broke out, and in my joy I forgot all about Gregor MacGregor, excepting when his registered letter came with a stamped address envelope enclosed for a receipt. I had come to expect the

blessed money, and used to wonder who the dotty MacGregor could be; then I found out.

"After this little dust-up in the North Sea and our tub having done herself proud, we have got shore leave while she goes into dock for a time. Well, the first person I barged into last night when I came ashore, feeling full of beans as a merry cricket, was my talkative friend from Portsmouth. I hailed him like a long lost brother, not that I like the chap, but his was a familiar face—you know the feeling, Terry.

"He talked, but I had my silencer on, not that I suspected him, but after the old man's lecture about keeping mum with strangers, I kept a shut mouth.

"Then he asked me some rather pointed questions about our manœuvres, guns and so forth. I gave him a frozen lip. Then he let me have it.

"By God, Terry, it was awful. He was a german agent; he admitted as much to me, and when I lost my wool and started to wire in, the filthy swine brought me up with a round turn by telling me it was from him I had been taking money. Think of it, lad! german money! and I, brainless ass that I always have been, swanning it round on dirty german money!

"I thought of my people, and how they would feel. He reminded me he had my letters and receipts and could prove I had been taking money ever since war had broken out. I told him I would send it all back at once, and so I would, because I would have got it somehow. He refused, said he didn't want to be repaid, and if I would only tell him a few little things he wanted to know, I could have as much money as I wanted within reason; if I didn't, he would prove that I had been in german pay and he shewed me how he could do it without disclosing his own identity.

"The last hours of my life are cheered by the memory of the dirty left I lifted him clean off his feet with, and leaving him knocked out I have come back to the dear old tub.

"Pretty filthy story, isn't it, old son? But you have more brains than me, and might be able to think of something to save other asses like myself.

"So long, old sport. Fight the good fight, and knock Hell out of the swine when you get your chance. I would

like to have lasted it out, and seen our little boaties sail into the big scrap and give the other side some Bingo biff. Still, you chaps will be there fairly in it. Good-bye and God bless you, old man.

"TIMMY.

"P.S. It seems a bit petty, but I'm hanged if I can make my pen write germans with a capital G; funny, isn't it? I don't grudge Hell a capital H.

"T. R.

"P.P.S. I say, Terry, there is one thing that is worrying me a bit. At Christmas time I sent June a gold cross. I paid for it with one of the tainted fivers. Get her to chuck it into the fire. I'd hate to think that June. . . . Tooril ooril, old chap; I'm off.

"T."

Several times during the reading of this letter Terry's voice had broken, and he had been forced to pause in order to gain sufficient self-control to continue; as for Anne, her face and lips were chalk white, her eyes dry, shinning like living coals.

As he finished reading, Terry rose and, walking to the window, stood with his back to the room while he struggled with his emotion. Presently he turned round and looked at Anne.

"Putrid, isn't it?" he asked. "I had gone ashore with the Old Man, and was cursing my luck in having to return to the ship with him. We were just too late. Then I found this" (indicating the letter). "I showed it to the skipper. He gave me shore leave. I traced the swine to his bed. Timmy had bruised him a bit, but I . . . well, I don't think he will live." Terry had spoken in spasmodic jerks. His expression was set and grim.

Anne had appeared to be in a trance, only her breath coming heavily through dilated nostrils, and the pallor of her face evidenced her concern. From between parched lips she breathed rather than spoke: "Timmy, Doug-

las, Ronnie, God . . . in . . . Heaven . . . can . . . it . . . be?"

Immediately Terry reproached himself . . .

"Poor old girl!" he soothed, sitting down beside her and putting his arm over her shoulder; "I should have told you more carefully. I would have only I wanted you to know, and . . . well, you can see what might happen to me," he excused.

"What, Terry, what?" His words had brought her sharply back to the present.

"Well, dear, to kill a man, however justified you may have been. . . ."

"Did you kill him?"

"Pretty nearly. You see, I lost my wool completely. I would willingly pay for the satisfaction of thrashing the swine, but it was a fool thing to do. I never could control my fists with cads," he finished ruefully.

"But what will . . . what can happen to you?" demanded Anne.

"It all depends whether the swine lives. Jolly rotten luck on you and Mater and the girls, though."

"Terry, do you mean that you might be court-martialled?"

"Either that, or, more likely, I will have to stand the racket of a civil trial. I thought I had better prepare you for eventualities, Anne, but unless the brute dies, I don't think there's much danger of trouble. He did not seem anxious for publicity. I questioned him a bit while I was making him get out of bed, but he would not say a word."

The telephone bell had been ringing sharply for some seconds. Now Anne rose to answer it.

"Yes? Is that you, June? Yes, he is here. Oh, wait, I will tell him." Turning from the instrument she addressed Terry. "It is June. She is most agitated. Some men are waiting for you. Will you talk to her, Terry?"

"Tell her I will come round at once," he said. "And

now, my dear, I must go," he told Anne, after she had spoken to his sister and hung up the receiver.

"Who do you think they are, Terry?" Her dread was evident.

"I should think poor Timmy's murderer is dead."

"And you? . . . oh, Terry. Terry, my dear!" She put her arms round his neck and clung close to him.

"My sweetheart, I am so sorry, but if I had these last few hours over again, I would not act differently. Apart from the suffering I have brought to you dear things from my impetuousness, I have one other regret, that is, I would have liked to have traced the originator to this foul plot for getting youngsters into their power, to his den, and given him what I gave the fiend in Portsmouth, and a bit more."

"I know someone who will help me find out, Terry. I shall go to him at once."

"Be careful, Anne. Are you sure you can trust this friend of yours?"

"Yes, oh, yes; it is Lord Wellrock."

"Wellrock?" He frowned. "If his son is any criterion, do not trust the father; and Wellrock is half German, isn't he?"

"He has lived here all his life, Terry." She dismissed the subject for the more urgent one at the moment of bidding her lover good-bye.

At Terry's request Anne did not accompany him to his home. Half an hour later, when she telephoned through to ask for news, Patty told her that Terry had gone off in a taxi with the two men, who were detectives. Mrs. Palmer had completely broken down, and would Anne come round at once?

## CHAPTER XXXI

PATTY, dear, your mother is resting, and poor June wants to be alone; I must run into the City, but I will come back as soon as I can," Anne said that afternoon, towards four o'clock.

"Don't be long, Anne," pleaded a very subdued Patty. "Of course, it is terrible for mother, but it is for June my heart aches; she and Timmy were going to be engaged, you know."

"Yes, darling, I know. Poor little June! But now we must think for Terry."

Indeed we must; and wasn't he perfectly splendid to thrash that beast?" cried Patty.

"Terry is wonderful," agreed Anne enthusiastically, and, giving the desired promise to hasten, she departed for the City.

Arriving at the bank, she sent in her name, and word came back asking her to wait, his Lordship would see her soon.

Anne seated herself in an alcove near the window of the waiting-room. Mechanically she rolled and unrolled her umbrella, quite unaware of her nervous action, leaving the article over which she had expended such care lying forgotten on the seat when, after a brief wait, a clerk came to usher her into his Lordship's room.

"This is a pleasant surprise, Miss Raymond," he greeted her, with extended hand.

Then a curious thing happened. As he came forward to meet her, for no reason that she could find, Anne suddenly experienced a complete revulsion of feeling for him; an abhorrence and distrust of the man seized her, such as she had felt years ago on first meeting him.

Terry is right, she thought, he is a German; then as suddenly as the feeling had come, she cast it from her; surely her mind must be a little unhinged to foster such wicked ideas about this noble being, who had proved himself to be the soul of generosity. Yet, Terry's words, allied to the thought which had seized her on her entry into this room, despite herself, shook her faith in Well-rock; instead of launching forth into the whole distressful story, she decided to dissimulate, or to at least employ caution, instead of opening her heart to him as she had intended doing. Subconsciously she prayed silently for guidance, to do the right thing, both for these sailors, whom she had been so happy in thinking she was helping, and also for her lover, who was under arrest.

"Pray be seated, and tell me what amazingly urgent thing it is that brings you here," he was saying, while these thoughts were rushing through her mind.

"I hope you will forgive my intrusion," she spoke slowly; "it is the first time I have trespassed."

"I am generally so occupied that it has been more satisfactory to carry on our little charitable works by letter," he remarked.

"This time I could not wait to write, I—— It was something important," she finished lamely.

"Someone important?" he unintentionally misinterpreted, and Anne's heart missed a beat, as she noticed the quickened interest in his voice. "Then you were quite right to come to me. It has been easy to assist these lads and men whom you have so sympathetically ascertained were in trouble, but I can quite realise a more important personage might be a little more difficult to render assistance to."

"That is the case exactly," she replied, blindly following the lead he had unwittingly given. Where it was taking her, she could not, for the moment, see; it was as though some foreign entity had taken possession of her being.

"That will make our work all the more interesting,"

commented Wellrock. "Who is this mysterious sailor?" he questioned.

"I— It is— I cannot say," she concluded desperately. For a wild moment she resolved to abandon this farce, to tell him plainly why she had come to him.

"It will be difficult to help, if I am not to know who he is."

"I see, yes; I was foolish to come." Anne rose heavily to her feet.

"Wait, Miss Raymond, sit down again, we will see what can be done. Now," he continued, as she obeyed him, and sank back into the chair, "here is the situation. A friend of yours, a Navy man, on active service, I take it?"—she nodded weakly in agreement—"is in pecuniary trouble. His rank is higher than any of your other protégés, and it would be detrimental to his position were it known that he was in need of money. Now, if we were to depart from our usual rule, and supply the necessary funds direct through you, how would that be?"

Sick with her own deception, Anne closed her eyes, and remained silent. Every moment it was becoming more difficult to end this farce.

"That could be done," he went on, as she did not speak; "but, pardon me, I am a business man and very methodical. In such an eventuality, would he send you a receipt? I suppose he writes to you?"

It was only after he had repeated the question that Anne nodded affirmatively.

"You would, of course, keep his letters and the receipt in some safe place in your flat?" suggested Wellrock.

"Oh, perhaps, after all, he could manage without borrowing." Desperately Anne struggled to throw off this night-mare web in which she was entangling herself, but even as she spoke, this something stronger than herself, which was guiding her, counselled her to remain quiescent for yet a little longer.

"Nonsense; a part of our pact was to help one another,

to assist these brave sailors. Are you going to break your part of the bargain?"

"No, no, but—— Lord Wellrock, how have you managed to help so many of these men without their knowing that you were the philanthropist who came to their aid?" she inquired suddenly.

"Very easily. The trifling amount which this particular department of yours costs me, is nothing in comparison to the sums I dispose of throughout the year, but if I did it all myself, I would have no time left to make the money, or any portion of that which I dispense. I have my agents for this, as I have my clerks for my banking business," he smilingly explained.

"You can trust these agents you employ?" she asked.

"What makes you ask such a thing?" A little harshness crept into his voice.

"I just thought—— It would be a terrible thing if you discovered your agents had been playing you false," she said.

Wellrock looked at her sharply. Could she know, did she suspect? No, no (silently he answered his own unspoken question); quite impossible, he had been too careful for that. Still, one of those youngsters whose name she had given him may have hinted the facts to her. It was not likely, but in case she ever learnt the truth, it would be as well to put into her heart a selfish fear, so that she would hesitate for her own sake, if ever she felt like breaking the promise which he had extracted from her years ago, never to mention what she was doing, or his name in connection with these donations. Not that he feared this girl, whatever she might discover, for who would believe her, who would dare take her word against his, the wealthy, powerful banker?

Why, he could ruin her reputation, shatter her good name by a lift of his eyebrows and shrug of his shoulders, plus the proof he had that Anne Raymond, penniless spinster, young, good-looking, had been living in comfort for years at his (Wellrock's) expense.

"My agents would no more dare keep the moneys meant for other purposes than my clerks would dare steal." He spoke smoothly, while he was thinking of how he could covertly terrify her, without letting her suspect the warning.

"I did not mean they would steal, but supposing, just supposing, you suddenly discovered that your agents were blackmailers or something horrible?"

"There are very effectual ways of dealing with such persons. I would know what to do with anyone who played me false. If ever it is your misfortune to come in contact with men of that description, let me know, for you, an unprotected girl, would stand no chance against an astute person, especially when one realises, as I have suddenly done, that you are unfortunately living in a rather anomalous position."

"How—. What do you mean?"

"You have no money, and for years have lived in comparative comfort without appearing to work; it really is very awkward, and most remiss of me not to have thought of it before. We must take steps to remedy all this. Still, we must not anticipate unpleasantness; let us hope, for all our sakes, that such contingencies as you have suggested will never rise. Now to our work, Miss Raymond. I propose handing you a sum of money. Will two hundred and fifty pounds be sufficient?"

"Oh, please, no, I—I had better not take it," cried Anne.

"Nonsense, it is not for you. You must remember —" (He touched an electric bell button attached to his desk.) "Bring me two hundred and fifty pounds," he ordered the clerk who had rapidly appeared in answer to the summons. "If any more is needed for the same individual, you must let me know. I have never thanked you for the generous way you have helped me be of service to the cause I have so at heart," he said smoothly. Then as the messenger, after returning and depositing the notes on the desk, withdrew: "Now, here is the money

which is to lighten some brave fellow's dilemma. I am sure when you think of that, you are far too noble to regret any sacrifice that this work of yours entails." Gently, but firmly, he inserted the envelope containing the notes into the girl's unwilling hand, and led her easily to the door. "Good afternoon, Miss Raymond, and again thank you," he said, as he closed the door after her.

With her thoughts in a bemazed whirl, Anne found her legs carrying her mechanically towards the street, where the steadily-falling rain recalled to mind the umbrella which she had left in the waiting-room. Retracing her steps, she found the missing article; picking it up, she stood silently trying to collect her thoughts.

What had Lord Wellrock meant? Was she doing wrong in accepting his pay? Had he meant to terrify her; if so, with what object? Which was the real man, this whom she disliked and distrusted, or the one who had won her warm admiration by his charity? Was Terry right, was this man pro-German? Had he been responsible for these boys' deaths?

A hundred such questions clamoured for an answer. Her head felt as though it would burst.

She must know, she *must*, whether Lord Wellrock was an honest man or not: it was only fair to the sailors whose names she had so happily sent him. She must know for her own, for Terry's sake, for his (Wellrock's) sake.

Impulsively she turned and moved towards the banker's private office. She would tell him everything; her suspicions, confess her deceit of a few minutes ago, in letting him think there was some friend of hers in difficulty. She would say it all, return this two hundred and fifty pounds, and learn from watching his face, listening to what he said, exactly what manner of man this was, on whose money she had been living all these years.

She reached the door, which stood very slightly ajar; her hand was raised to knock, when through the open-

ing the sound of her own name being mentioned, and in a woman's voice, a voice, moreover, which she instantly recognised as belonging to Mrs. Clarke, fell distinctly on her ears.

"... No, no visitors; Miss Raymond has been at her hospital all day," was what Anne heard, and immediately in some singular way, her brain became clear and incisive; the confused whirring in her head which had troubled her, making it impossible for her to think lucidly, came to a dead stop, like a clock that has run down, leaving her mind coldly calculating.

No room was left for thought of shame at eavesdropping. For the dead boys, and for those still living, for Terry, she must listen and learn what these people were saying.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Milord."

"You are lying; she has had a visitor to-day."

"It must have been when I was at the dentist's."

"What time was that?"

"Just after lunch."

"You have been back to Baker Street?"

"Yes, Milord."

"Nothing there?"

"Nothing fresh, Milord."

"Then what did you come here for?"

"To ask you about my husband."

"What of him?"

"I hear he has been hurt."

"How?"

"Someone assaulted him, and he is in hospital."

"Where?"

"Portsmouth."

"How did you hear?"

"Mr. Freddie told me; I met him accidentally. Mr. Saintleigh had come on leave, and told Mr. Freddie's wife that one of the young gentlemen from a ship had

attacked a man and very nearly killed him. Mr. Freddie found out it was Gustav."

"Clumsy fool," was all the sympathy the wounded Gustav received from his cousin and master. "I will ascertain the truth. Now go back to Baker Street. Miss Raymond will be writing and receiving letters; watch carefully, let me know to whom she writes, and all she says. You have keys to her desk?"

"Yes, Milord."

Anne heard no more; she slipped quietly away, and now she knew the hideous truth. This Wellrock, whose pay she had been taking, was a German spy. She (terrible thought) had been assisting him; in a manner she was responsible for the premature death of these lads. This Mrs. Clarke had been placed with her in order to spy; Gustav, the wounded husband, surely that must have been the creature whom Terry had thrashed.

The wildly improbable truth had pulled Anne's nerves together like a miraculous tonic, her mental balance was completely restored, her brain was cold and sharp as finely-tempered steel.

She hailed a passing taxi-cab and drove to Curzon Street. It was six o'clock when she dismissed the chauffeur, and asked if Sir Babcock Roofe was at home. On hearing that he was, she sent a message by the butler asking to see him at once on urgent private affairs.

"Here, young woman, what do you mean by comin' and compromisin' me like this?" chuckled Sir Babcock, as Anne entered his private den. "Comin' and askin' for a private interview with me, and my wife in the house. I never heard of such a thing," he roared.

"Could you ask Lady Roofe to come here? I would like her to hear what I have to say," asked Anne.

"If you insist; takes a bit of the spice out of it, though, to have Helen here," he declared.

Her Ladyship was sent for, and after greeting Anne warmly, she settled down quietly with her husband to listen to what the girl had come to tell them.

For nearly an hour she talked, telling them everything, right from her first meeting with Wellrock at the Abbey up to her late interview, and of the conversation she had just overheard.

"God bless my soul, Anne, if I hadn't known your father and mother, I would ask if there was insanity in your family," he boomed, when she ceased speaking.

"I am quite sane; every word I have told you is true." Anne spoke quietly, but with determination.

"But, Wellrock; lord, I have known him for donkey's years! Sure you don't suffer from thing-um-bobs in your brain, eh?" he questioned, pacing restlessly up and down the room, wearing the gold-laced cap on his head which he always donned in moments of agitation: "Keeps me cool," he declared.

"I have always disliked Wellrock, and now you see who was right in that divorce case," was Lady Roofe's very feminine comment.

"Divorcin' is one thing, spyin' is another, and if he is a spy, be God, we'll shoot him; but is he, that is the question, Anne, is he? You women, you know, you women," he mumbled.

"From what Anne tells us, there is no doubt about it. Have him shot and find out afterwards," suggested Lady Roofe in all seriousness. Her eyes were still wet with the tears she had shed over the young sailors' self-inflicted deaths.

"In case you needed further proof, I thought out a way of giving it to you, when I was driving here from the city," said Anne. "Here is this two hundred and fifty pounds, which he has given me for an entirely mythical person. Now, Sir Babcock, could you not arrange with some Commander whom you can trust to keep his own counsel, and to play a part, to accept this money, and write me letters giving me pieces of important information, which is to be entirely fictitious, and see if it is conveyed to the enemy?"

Sounds like a blood and thunder serial story," belied Sir Babcock.

"I do not see that you need any other proof than Anne's story, Bab. If you do, then her suggestion is an excellent one. Now, who do you propose shall play the part and write to her—Frank Brinvelle?" hazarded Lady Roofe.

"Can't be got at; we want a johnnie on the spot chap. Frank is too far away."

"Then John MacAnderman, he is here in London now."

"Old John is all right, but the man we want must be able to keep his own counsel, as Anne suggested," explained Sir Babcock.

"Surely he can," championed Lady Roofe.

"My dear Helen, John is married," was the trenchant criticism with which her husband eliminated MacAnderman.

"I've got it," he cried suddenly. "Kellow Haywoode, he is the very identical individual for our purpose." Sir Babcock was more impressed and disturbed by Anne's recital than he would admit.

Finally, when all details concerning the plot to prove conclusively whether Wellrock was a loyal British subject or not, had been arranged, Anne went back to the Palmers' flat, then home to bed, where, exhausted though she was, she lay awake half the night thinking of Sir Babcock Roofe's last and oft-repeated phrase:

"Be God, if he is a spy, we will shoot him."

## CHAPTER XXXII

**I**N spite of the scandal caused by her divorce, Lady Mary bravely continued her duties at the Belgravia Hospital, and it was here, that news was brought her of the birth of Joan's son. She could take no pleasure in her new grandchild, such as she had done when Marigold's splendid children were born; only a great pity for the newly-made little mother stirred her.

It was to the hospital that Kendall brought her the news of Chalembert's arrest.

The whole world rang with this amazing incident; the courage and daring of putting under arrest so great a politician as Chalembert by the French, when they were in the throes of war, roused admiration and applause.

Cleo first carried the intelligence to Colonel Coolter. She was in London on a flying visit, and had much to say with reference to the Wellrock divorce.

"I did tell you to be careful of 'im, 'e is a bad one that. Poor Lady Mary, I did not 'ear till it was too late, and if I 'ad 'ear in time, of what use me, Cleo, to come and say something; it would not do some good," Cleo explained candidly to Colonel Coolter.

She also told him in detail of her successful efforts to bring the truth regarding Chalembert home to him.

"But me, I 'ad a bad time first. That Chalembert 'e find out I was in Spain. I think Wellrock must 'ave 'ear it, and let him know. La, la, 'ow I suffer, every minute I was under someone's eyes, they watch me like cats watching some mice. I feel afraid to even 'ave my bath, yairs. The gendarmes come to put me under arrest, *ma foi*, it was gay, I tell you, Monsieur. If it 'ad not been my France that was in danger, I tell you the verity, I

would 'ave put myself in a convent with my 'airs all cut off, and a gown all straight that 'ide the figure, and flat boots of incredible ugliness; but no, such a blessed life was not to be for me, I tell myself. I must find if this Chalembert 'e is a villain."

"What did you do?" Coolter asked interestedly.

"I find out," she replied laconically.

"You seem to have done your job pretty thoroughly," he congratulated. "What do you think will happen to Chalembert?"

"They will rouse him at dawn, and feed 'im 'is last breakfast on lead," was her cryptic way of describing what she hoped would be the traitor's end.

"You people waste no time when once you start in," commented Coolter.

"And you would be wise to learn from us. We do not like to let the world know of Chalembert's treachery, but it is better if one 'as a disease, that a sharp knife should be used deep and quick," she commented significantly.

"On whom, amongst us, would you operate?" he inquired curiously.

"A little few, Shipley and Wellrock very quick. Me, I 'ear that Monsieur and Madame Shipley begin to feel some icy blasts round their foots, that is what you call it, yairs?"

"Cold feet," supplied Coolter. "Why, because of Chalembert's arrest?"

She nodded assent.

"But you have the quick wit," she mocked. "Their foots will be more cold when all is known; *et maintenant*, I go. And, Monsieur," she hesitated, "I would send salutations to Lady Mary; I do not ask to see 'er, for I—I am me, Cleo; *alors*," with a defiant toss of her head, "good-bye."

It was many months before the French woman's prognostications were realised. Colonel Coolter thought of her words when he heard the Shipley's had gone to America on account (so they themselves declared) of

Berry Shipley's health, which would not permit his continuing in a sphere of public activities.

Poor Shipley. Everyone felt a pitying contempt for the fellow, and "the best thing that could have happened" was the epitaph expressed by those who knew him, when his death, which occurred within the year after his departure from England, was announced.

The Rodent became the centre of a third-rate, idle set, notoriously decadent.

It was rumoured that she married a man not half her age, over whom she made herself a laughing-stock until he deserted her in disgust; but no one was sufficiently interested in the Rodent to ascertain the truth of the story.

Cleo was correct in her prediction of Chalembert's end. He received his well-deserved "breakfast of lead." His trial and final brought to light most amazing German plot's, in which many smaller fry were implicated; some of them sharing his fate and others escaping with sentences of life-long imprisonment. It proved, indeed (to use a favourite journalistic expression in connection with the whole affair), a "cleansing of an Augean stable;" but, unlike the task which was performed by Hercules in a single day, these trials, verdicts and changes occupied many months of strenuous work.

Lord Wellrock stood aloof, listening, watching, planning, always planning. His first twinge of apprehension came with Stephen Pentry's appointment to Shipley's discarded position.

Pentry was neither to be cajoled nor bought. All efforts on the part of the yellow English to place him in compromising positions where he could be comfortably blackmailed into quiescence had failed. The honour of his country stood before every other consideration. Many of the yellow breed felt uneasy when this man stepped into his powerful position.

Wellrock's extreme caution in all his dealings gave him a sense of comparative security, even now that the whole Teuton race had made itself reviled in the eyes of the

world, until every German-born man and woman was anathema in the hearts of civilised peoples. Wellrock went serenely on his way, working evil behind the reputation he had built himself for being a philanthropic Englishman, although this could not altogether save him from a certain amount of suspicion, founded solely on the fact that he had been born in Germany. His son, on the contrary, claiming England as his birthplace, had proved invaluable to Wellrock and his fraternity; Freddie could travel hither and thither, and learn much that only Englishmen were permitted to know in their own country in war-time.

Joan, too, proved an unwitting source of information, through her husband, to the German party. She had so many relatives and friends in both Services and in official positions, from whom she learnt much of what was likely to occur in the prosecution of war and politics, and naturally passed all her knowledge on to her husband, in response to his carefully careless questioning.

Lord Sandham had never forgotten Lady Mary's disclosures with regard to her son, but having nothing definite to go on, beyond her word, although he did not doubt it, he continually tried to assure himself that she had exaggerated. He was devoted to his only daughter, and for the sake of her happiness he kept the hints he had received impugning the loyalty of his son-in-law and Wellrock, from Joan's ears. Now here at Wellrock Abbey, where he had come to spend a few days with the radiant little mother and his two-months'-old grandson, Sandham rejoiced that she was happy and tried to turn a deaf ear to the ugly reports regarding her husband and father-in-law that were increasingly filling the air.

His tranquillity was short-lived, for the very afternoon on which he was reassuring his conscience that he had been wise in not disturbing his daughter's peace of mind, the hand of Fate swept her into a vortex of unhappiness from which she was never completely to emerge.

The night before, *The Manatee*, a ship lying off the

coast, had been destroyed by an internal explosion. Most of the lives on board were lost. There was every reason for the strong suspicion that the catastrophe had been engineered through the agency of a German spy.

The homes of many sailors on *The Manatee* were in, and about Lowestoft, and Joan had set off in her governess-cart to pay a round of sympathetic calls on the women folk of the murdered men (for murder it assuredly was). Before she went, she informed her father of her intention.

"Do you think it wise to go alone, my dear?" he inquired.

"Good gracious, yes, Daddie. Why shouldn't it be?" she asked laughingly; "I go everywhere alone when Freddie is not here. Ah! you do not like Freddie," she added quickly, as Lord Sandham frowned. "Poor boy, he is not a general favourite; I think that is one of the reasons I am so fond of him," she stated.

"You are fond of him, Joan?"

"Indeed and indeed I am, Daddie; I love my husband and I adore my beautiful baby," she said happily.

"That is good; then run along on your errand of mercy, my dear," he advised, patting her hand as she leaned over to kiss him before she departed.

She was well known in the district, where hitherto her visits had been eagerly welcomed, but to-day she noticed a changed attitude towards her. At first she attributed this to the distress the people were experiencing over the tragedy. In Corton she descended from her cart and walked down the street, where group after group of these bereaved souls turned coldly from her proffered condolence, ignoring her impulsively extended hand.

A burning patch of crimson sprang to life in either of the young wife's cheeks; her eyes blazed and her firm little chin went up in the air as half a dozen women in whose houses she had always been greeted affectionately fell silent at her approach, deliberately turning their backs on her.

"What is the matter? Why do you treat me like this?" demanded Joan, indignantly. Then, as none of them vouchsafed an answer, she appealed to them by name. "Mrs. May, what is it? Mrs. White, Mrs. Barns, you, Mrs. Clegg, tell me; I have a right to know."

There was an instant's pause, then big, white-faced Mrs. Shaw turned a countenance, drawn and haggard with suffering, to the little aristocrat.

"A right, you say? A right? What right 'ave you, the wife of a German, to come 'ere talkin' to us, us, whose men's been killed by your 'usband's people?" she demanded bitterly.

"You must be mad!" gasped Joan. "I am **Mrs. Scott**, from Wellrock Abbey, you know."

"We know all right," accorded Mrs. Shaw grimly. "We know Mrs. Scott, or Mrs. Schultz, or whatever you like to call yourself. Your 'usband's father is a German, for all 'is English titles, a bad, wicked, spyin' German!"

"You are wrong; it is you who are wicked to dare say such a thing!" cried Joan.

"Wasn't 'is father a German?" asked Mrs. Shaw belligerently.

"His Lordship was born in Germany, I believe, but he has lived here all his life; he is as English as you or I," hotly defended Joan.

"I'll thank you not to class me in with 'im, if you please, Ma'am; I am English, thank God!"

"And so am I, and so is Lord Wellrock, and my husband too," protested the young wife. "You have hurt me most bitterly. You whom I thought my friends!" As she spoke Joan turned to leave them, when the voice of another woman in its toneless despair arrested her steps.

"You can't 'elp it, Ma'am, but it is true. 'Is Lordship and 'is son are what Mrs. Shaw calls them; my sister oughter know; she was married to one of them."

"What do you mean, Mrs. May? Are you daring to

imply that your sister was married to either my husband or his father?" Joan turned on the speaker haughtily.

"No, to another German," dully intoned Mrs. May.

"This is all silly nonsense about my husband and his father being Germans," Joan protested.

"Oh, no, it ain't, Ma'am," Mrs. Shaw took up the task of spokeswoman. "We 'ad 'eard it, but 'ardly thought it was true; knowin' 'is Lordship and Mr. Freddie for so many years like, we couldn't believe it, not till Mrs. Wood, as she called 'erself, Mrs. May's sister, died, and then Mrs. May told us all about it."

"Told you what?" demanded Joan.

"Told us that Wood never was 'er sister's name, it bein' really Schott. 'Er 'avin' been married to a German called that, she took the name of Wood to 'ide 'erself and 'er disgrace after 'er 'usband 'ad left 'er, and 'er only boy 'ad killed 'imself in jail, where 'e'd been put when 'e was caught doin' dirty spy work for 'is Lordship. That's what she told us, if you want to know," ended Mrs. Shaw triumphantly.

"What terrible story is this?" Joan asked.

"Tain't no story, Ma'am." Mrs. May spoke dully. "It is all true. It is goin' on ten years now since me sister Bess come back 'ere to me. She walks in—'Aggie,' she ses, 'Aggie, I 'aven't got no 'usband and no son; don't never ask me about them, and from now on I want to be known as Mrs. Wood,' she ses. 'Come in, Bess,' I told 'er, 'my 'ome is your 'ome,' I ses; 'so long as me and Jim 'ave a roof over our 'eads, you are welcome to share it,' and I never asked 'er no questions. From time to time she'd tell me a bit. Fair 'eart-breakin' was the times she'd 'ad, poor Bess! Then when she passed away a fortnight ago, she left me a bundle of papers and a letter tellin' me to open the parcel and I'd learn all about what 'ad 'appened; and I did, and there they was, newspaper cuttin's and all, and a long sort of letter Bess 'ad written tellin' me all about 'er boy and Lord Wellrock, and 'ow kind Lady Mary, 'is Lordship's wife, 'ad been to 'er. I've got

it all of you'd like to read it, Ma'am; and now poor Bess 'as gone and my Jim too." Tears were openly falling down the cheeks of her listeners. Mrs. May and Joan alone remained dry-eyed.

"There must be some mistake." Joan's limbs shook beneath her. She leant for support against the lintel of a door.

"The same sort of mistake 'as took our men last night," scoffed Mrs. Shaw through her tears.

"She can't 'elp it," protested Mrs. May lifelessly, "any more than my poor Bess could. Bess didn't know what devils Germans was till she married one, and Mrs. Scott 'ere ain't to be blamed for what 'is Lordship and Mr. Freddie is. You'd best come in and sit down a moment," she suggested kindly to Joan, whose looks evidenced the stress of emotion from which she was suffering.

"No, no," breathed Joan, "I must go. Your sister was mistaken. Perhaps the loss of her boy—her husband \_\_\_\_\_"

"If you'd 'eard Bess, if you'd read 'er papers you wouldn't think there was a mistake, Ma'am," asserted Mrs. May.

"Not that we 'aven't 'ad our suspicions before," chimed in Mrs. Shaw. "We've 'eard funny things about your 'usband, Ma'am, which you might be interested to 'ear. 'E's at the bottom of this explosion on *The Manatee*, if you ask me, and there's funny goings on at the Abbey with signallin' and lights and things," she added significantly.

"You are wrong, you are wrong. I tell you it is wicked of you to say these dreadful things! My husband and his father are as loyal as I am." Freddie's wife's indignation was plainly genuine.

"If we thought you wasn't no better than them we'd take and throw you over the cliff's, and it's what we'll do to them if we catch them, so I'm warnin' you!" said Mrs. Shaw firmly.

"I can only think that your grief has turned your

heads. I shall tell my husband and his Lordship what you are saying; they will come themselves and prove to you how wrong you are."

"They won't if they value their precious necks," scoffed Mrs. Shaw.

"Not them; they won't face us," chimed in another woman.

"They're right, Ma'am," agreed Mrs. May. "Mr. Freddie and 'is Lordship won't dare show their faces in Lowestoft again."

"What do you say to that?" cried Mrs. Shaw.

"When such a contingency arises I will come myself and tell you what I think." With an immense effort of will, Joan recalled her physical strength and blindly made her way back to the waiting cart.

Of the drive back to Wellrock Abbey she remembered nothing. Then somehow she found herself standing before her father.

"They say Freddie is a German spy; that his father too—"

"My poor child, who told you?" Lord Sandham rose and went quickly to his daughter.

"Freddie, Freddie! do you understand?" she cried frantically.

"Yes, yes, my little girl. I am sorry you should have found out," he soothed, putting his arms round her.

"Found out what?" She wrenched from his embrace. "That my husband and his father are spies? It is not true, it isn't—is it?" she broke off to demand wildly.

Lord Sandham's eyes dropped. He could not bear to face the agony written in his well-loved child's eyes. Then, as the floor seemed to rock beneath her feet, she swayed back and forth. He sprang to her support.

"Come and sit down, Joan dear; you are faint."

As in a trance she let him lead, almost carry her, to a chair, into which she dropped heavily.

"Daddy, do you know what I have been saying to you?

Do you understand what it is I have heard?" She spoke with difficulty.

"Yes, yes, Joan. It was very wrong of whoever told you."

"My God!" Not a vestige of colour remained in her face. Her lips were chalk white. For a long moment there was silence, then: "You too, you, my own father, can actually think these hideous things true!" she whispered.

"I tried not to, Joan."

"How long have you thought them?"

"I had heard rumours, but put it down to idle gossip until the day you were married," he confessed.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"It was too late."

"Too late? You mean I was married before you heard?"

"Yes, dear."

"Why did you not tell me then? Not that I would have believed it," she added loyally.

"I still hoped it might not be true."

"What made you so ready to believe it?" she asked bitterly.

"The source of my information was such that I could not doubt."

"Who told you?" Then, as her father did not reply, she fiercely repeated the question. "Who told you?"

"His mother."

"Aunt Mary?"

For ten minutes Joan sat silent, with wide open eyes that saw nothing.

"I must go to London at once," was her ultimatum. "I must see Freddie."

"Had you not better wait until he returns here?" suggested her father.

"I must see him at once. I shall tell him what is being said, that even you are against him."

"My dear, I am sorry."

"You will be more than sorry. You will all go on your knees and beg his forgiveness," she threatened resentfully.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure, Joan; and now, my child, if you insist on taking this journey, I will accompany you," he announced firmly.

Joan made no objection to this decision. An hour later she and her father were travelling swiftly Londonward.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

WHILE Joan was talking with the bereaved women in Corton, her husband was interviewing his father, in the latter's City office. The object of the conference was the increasingly recurrent one between these two, of money: the son persistent, the father resentful, for despite his generous allowance, plus his pay, Freddie was continually demanding larger and more frequent sums.

The visit to-day had been paid at an inopportune moment. Lord Wellrock was most irritated, for his faithful, well-nigh invaluable secretary, Trent, had firmly refused to reconsider the resignation he had that morning tendered.

"No," he had replied, in answer to his Lordship's oily persuasiveness, "my mind is made up; I am leaving your service."

"You tell me you have no other position in view, neither have you arranged future plans; what is your reason for going, Trent?"

"My younger son, Ronald, has been killed, as you know—"

"Yes, yes, very sad, Trent. I never wished those lads of yours to join up; I told your wife so when I wrote to condole with her," sighed Wellrock.

"My younger son, Ronald, has been killed," repeated Mr. Trent, as though the interruption had never occurred; "my other boy, Paul, was wounded, captured. He has been in a German prison for nearly two years; he has been restored to us, an exchanged prisoner."

"Ah, I congratulate you, Trent; but what has this to do with your resignation?"

"My boy will never walk again. Not that he was so badly wounded when taken prisoner, but the treatment he was subjected to by his captors has left him a complete cripple; he was lashed, he was set on by dogs. Now, he who used to love animals, whimpers in terror if a poodle or a cat enters the room. He was starved and left practically naked; when anyone approaches him, even his mother or me, he shrinks in fear; if we raise a hand swiftly he moans; a hastily spoken word or quick step leaves him shaking, trembling, crying. His nerve is broken, his hair is grey; that it what the Germans have done to my boy."

"Very terrible, but it is the fortune of war, you know; we have German prisoners, as well as they have English ones. Again I repeat, I never wanted those splendid lads of yours to join up."

"And much as I have suffered on account of my sons, I would give them again and again and again, and willingly go myself, were I not too old, to beat the people among whom you were born." Trent spoke quietly and grimly.

"Trent, you forget yourself!" admonished Wellrock frowningly.

"On the contrary, I have just come to my senses. I am not a brilliant man and my awakening has been slow, slow but thorough. Never again, so help me God, will I knowingly speak with a German. My son's return has set me thinking. To a German, oaths of allegiance or otherwise are merely means to an end, and are taken solely to serve their own purposes. Many things that have happened since I have been in your employ are coming back to me now. My resignation holds good, I am leaving your service immediately." Without waiting to be dismissed from the banker's presence, or pausing to bid him farewell, Trent walked firmly to the door, closing it quietly after him, and so left the remunerative position he had held for twenty odd years.

It was while Wellrock was inwardly fuming with cha-

grin over the departure of his secretary that his son lounged in, and a controversy immediately ensued.

"Five thousand pounds—do you think I am made of money?" irritably demanded Wellrock, when Freddie had mentioned the sum he must have at once.

"I dunno, but since you put it like that, I have heard it said you were made of brass." The cool impertinence was meant.

"I refuse your request; good afternoon," had been Wellrock's retort.

"I must have the cash, I have earned it," and Freddie settled more comfortably into the arm-chair in which he had ensconced himself.

"As how?"

"The *Manatee* alone is worth five thou'."

"The allowance I make you should be ample for your needs; if you choose to take on extra responsibilities you can find money to pay for them yourself."

"Meaning the kid?"

"I do not mean your son; I was referring to the establishment you have lately set up in Half Moon Street; a disgusting and dangerous proceeding with your wife's town residence in Park Lane."

"I didn't know you knew of that," remarked Freddie conversationally.

"I know everything, snapped Wellrock.

"Not quite," corrected his son; "for instance, you are wrong in terming my gilded haunt of distraction in Half Moon Street 'lately set up.' I have had it for years; it is only the tenant who changes, the present one is devilish expensive, but worth it."

"Your thoughtless foolishness is evident, in having your wife's home situated a few hundred yards from that of your mistress," scathingly commented the father.

"Joan's choice was Park Lane. I did not bring contamination to her door, she insisted on settling near my front step," yawned Freddie.

"I refuse to give you the sum you ask for."

"Definite?"

"Definitely."

"Righto, there's lots of ways of raising the necessary." Freddie rose languidly to his feet as he spoke.

"As how?"

"Too many to enumerate; mortgaging my prospects will be easiest," confided the young blackguard.

Freddie won: he left the office with the desired cheque in his pocket and his father's curses on his head. Grinning contentedly, he entered his waiting car, and drove to call on the costly occupant of his house in Half Moon Street; this is where he was while poor little Joan, arriving in London and going direct to Park Lane, was sitting and waiting with a heart full of love for him. For Joan truly loved this unworthy specimen of mankind. Such cases form interesting studies for psychologists.

She knew nothing of his perfidy; even had she done so, it is doubtful whether her disgust for his transgressions would have killed her love for the man to whom she had completely given her heart. He and their baby comprised her world. She thought of her baby boy now; it was the first time she had left him for more than an hour. The adored wee thing had been asleep when she left Wellrock Abbey; she had risked waking him with a gentle kiss.

"He really is like his father, don't you think?" she had whispered to the capable nurse who had charge of the treasured babe.

Her thoughts passed from the infant to its father, her poor, maligned husband. She went over their courtship and hasty marriage. That New Year's Eve at the café in Paris recurred to her; she started as though someone had struck her, as the incidents of that night disclosed themselves before her mind. Freddie's indignant destruction of the grotesque portrayal of the Kaiser, his set, white face of displeasure as he had cast the fruit away, the instant's pause, followed by confused cries of: "*Laissez, laissez, il est un Allemand,*" "*Bravo l'Allemand,*" "*A bas*

*les Allemands," "Mettez à la porte," "Non, non, chacun pour son pays."*

She tried to put that night and its happenings from her, and when she failed, assured herself that it was nothing. Those were pre-war times; anyone might have acted as Freddie had. Objecting to ridiculing Royalty, even though it had been the now hated Kaiser, did not prove the objector German. Had it been Italy's king, or Spain's or any country's, he would have behaved in the same way. But would he? Something persisted within her she could not stifle.

Of course he would, her loyal heart maintained, and, furthermore, she would prove it. Springing to her feet, she ran to Freddie's den, where she remembered having seen a large canvas-covered case containing unframed pictures. She was almost certain she had seen engravings of different ruling sovereigns and even one of the Kaiser; yes, here was one of Italy's King and here the King of Norway, and yes, one of Wilhelm—two, three of the same diabolic countenance, with its upturned moustaches. Passionately Joan tore two representations of the German monarch into shreds and tossed them aside; taking one portrait of the evil man and other kings' pictures, she returned to her own sitting-room, just as her husband entered the house.

It was a little after six o'clock. Joan subconsciously wished it had been earlier or much later, for between these hours of six and eight o'clock she had often noticed a curious change come over Freddie; he became rude, restless, uneasy, very pragmatic, or equally taciturn. Generally he slipped away by himself; doubtless his reason for returning to his home now, was in order to be alone.

Throwing the pictures on the table, she ran to the door to call him, but he had disappeared. Joan rang the bell.

"Is Mr. Scott in?" she asked the butler who answered her summons.

"Just come in, Ma'am."

"Tell him I am here and wish to see him," she ordered. Then, struck by the excitement which the well-trained servant was endeavouring to suppress: "What is the matter?" she inquired.

"Beg pardon, Ma'am, there is a rumour about that the Kaiser's been assassinated," he informed her.

"I wonder if it is true," cried Joan.

"Don't know, Ma'am; it is in the evening papers," he remarked hopefully, as he retired to do her bidding.

"Hullo, Joan, what brings you up to town?" Freddie greeted her as he entered the room.

"Oh, Freddie, aren't you pleased to see me?" she asked as she held her face up to be kissed.

"Course I am; what's the latest?" he inquired casually, brushing her soft cheek with his lips.

"Haven't you heard?" she asked, forcing a smile and determining to break the horrible scandal about himself to her husband slowly and carefully. In order that he should not see how it had affected her, she would discuss the news of the day with him first.

"No, what is it?" he asked indifferently, stretching his arms above his head and yawning widely.

"The Kaiser has been assassinated," she told him triumphantly.

The effect of her smiling information put cold fear into her heart; for the first time, she doubted his loyalty. So long as she lived, she would always see him as he appeared at that moment. The yawn in which he was indulging ceased, yet his mouth remained agape. With arms still extended, his eyes came down to hers, his face went livid.

"It isn't true," he squealed; "damn you, it isn't true!"

"Freddie!" she fell back aghast.

"Who told you; how do you know?" he demanded domineeringly.

"It is a rumour that has got into the papers, I believe," replied Joan quietly.

Freddie sprang to a bell, rang, ordered the evening

papers to be brought him immediately; utterly ignoring his wife until his order was obeyed, he tore the pages open and eagerly scanned their contents.

"A silly unofficial rumour," he scoffed, throwing the journals from him.

Joan waited for him to apologise for his rudeness to her, but it appeared to have passed from his mind.

"I have some disquieting news to tell you," she said at length.

"Kid ill or something?" he asked, moving restlessly about the room.

"No, baby is very well;" then, as he did not ask her for her news: "They are saying you and your father are German spies." She came to the point without further hesitation.

"Who says so?" he demanded, pausing to attend her reply.

"The people in Lowestoft."

"Which ones?"

"The women folk of the *Manatee* victims."

"Oh, them! they don't count," he announced, renewing his interrupted walk.

"But, Freddie, it is a terrible thing for them to think."

"Nobody will take any notice of people like that," he assured her carelessly.

"It hurt me to hear them say such things," she told him wistfully.

"Then don't listen."

"That is not very kind," protested Joan.

"My dear girl, what do you expect me to do?" he asked belligerently. "Some lower class nobodies whose joy in life is to have a grievance against someone; this time they happen to have hit on me."

"And your father."

"He was born in Germany, as you know, so they have more cause to attack him; I was born here."

"Yes, yes, I know, Freddie; I am your wife and love

you, there is no need to reassure me," she told him proudly.

"Then what is all the fuss about?" His irritability was increasing.

"I want you to come back with me to Lowestoft and tell these poor souls they are mistaken."

"Not on your life," scoffed Freddie. "Let them say what they like, it can't affect me; what proof have they got?"

"None—how could they have?" she asked indignantly after a moment's thought.

For five minutes she tried gently to persuade him to accompany her back to Wellrock Abbey.

"Oh, chuck it, Joan, I'm fed, see you later," he put an end to the discussion by declaring, as he swung himself out of the room, leaving his wife alone with her disturbing thoughts, which pendulated between doubt and faith.

At one moment a fierce contempt for herself assailed her, in that she could experience an instant's distrust of her husband; then the same emotion was turned in his direction.

Proof—he asked what proof they had, not what reason for suspecting him, but what proof. Of course he was innocent of the accusation brought against him, then as he would not defend himself, she must do it for him. Poor Freddie, it was a wicked shame.

Wearily she picked up the pictures she had brought from his den, and holding them in her hand, she walked towards the door, meaning to restore them to their original case. The sudden entrance of her husband brought her to a stand-still.

His face had resumed its livid aspect, his mouth was twitching, his eyes were reduced to mere slits; in his trembling hands he held the torn pieces to which she had reduced the Kaiser's pictures.

"Who did this?" he interrogated furiously.

"I did," she quickly claimed.

"You little devil, how dare you?" he screamed.  
"Freddie!"

"If you touch my belongings again I'll turn you out of the house," he threatened savagely.

"How dare you speak to me like that? Are you mad?" she gasped.

"You remember what I say, and mind your own business," was the only answer he vouchsafed.

"I will do as I please," she asserted angrily.

"Not with my things."

"I shall."

"You will not."

Suddenly she recollected what she held in her hand; furiously she displayed one picture after another, tearing each into four pieces. He watched her, breathing quickly, but making no move to rescue the engravings until she arrived at the representation of the German Emperor.

"Stop!" he yelled.

"I will not," she answered, as with concentrated fury, she ripped the thing in two.

Freddie, who had sprung forward with uplifted hand to arrest her action, was too late; in a flash his hand descended, striking her stingingly on the cheek; again and again he struck her.

"Why should you care what I do with the picture of such an evil fiend?" she cried.

"By God, when he is ruling England you shall suffer for those words!" he squealed, his self-control completely gone. Once more he struck her, then picking up the two halves of the Kaiser's picture, he fled from the room.

Joan did not know she had been struck. She had felt no pain from the blows that left her delicate skin scarlet and bruised; the only fact of which she was cognisant was that her husband was a German at heart.

She stood where he had left her, swaying dizzily, her mouth open, hoarsely gasping for breath; queer little

noises emanated from her throat, then she fell full length on the floor, not unconscious, but completely exhausted.

Presently her youthful strength asserted itself, and she struggled to her feet. All her blind fury had vanished, she was deadly calm. With hands that felt like lead, she resumed the hat and coat she had discarded on entering the house a few hours ago; steadily she walked down the stairs, out through the front door, and crossing the street, entered the deserted Park.

She must be alone and think this out. Mechanically her feet propelled her body; round and round in a circle she went.

Freddie, her husband, was a German. She no longer doubted the Lowestoft women's stories, nor her father's hints. Freddie, whom she had loved, no, *did* love; this trait in him she abhorred, but he himself as she had always thought of him, her husband, the father of her baby, she still loved.

She felt her cheek grow damp, and touching it found blood on her hand. Vaguely she wondered how she had managed to cut her face; so great was her mental stress that her husband's brutal attack had not yet penetrated her consciousness.

For hours she paced Hyde Park, wondering (as his mother had so often done) what she was to do. Could she betray Freddie? She shuddered from the thought, her heart yearned towards him no, no, a thousand times no, she was his wife. If all the world turned against him she must stand staunch and share his fate.

"Beg pardon, miss, could you tell me the shortest way to St. George's Hospital?" a voice accosted her.

"Oh!" her overstrung nerves forced a little cry of fear from her lips. By the dim light of the misty moon she recognised the speaker as a tall, slim, wounded Australian soldier, his khaki overcoat partially hiding the blue which makes every observer kind to the wearer; he was minus a leg, and leaned heavily on his crutches. "Yes, of

course, just straight down through the gates and across the road," she directed.

"Ta, sorry to have startled you, but I'm a bit late, and I don't know my way about Blighty," he explained.

"No trouble at all, nothing could be that we stay-at-homes could do for you splendid men who have fought for us," she said warmly. "Come, I will show you the way."

"We've only been doin' our bit for the old country," he deprecated in his soft, drawling voice as he hopped clumsily along beside her.

"You are fond of England?" she asked, feeling a relief at the respite from her thoughts which this unexpected interlude was granting her.

"It's great!" he enthused, employing the expression which every Australian will utilise in appreciative description of that which pleases him, be it country, picture-palace, horse-race, feast, girl, comrade or view. "We always speak of England as 'home,' 'down under' where I come from."

"You have proved your devotion," she commented, indicating his crutches.

"Meaning my leg, that's nothin'. My oath, I'm one of the lucky ones. Here I am goin' back to Australia in a few weeks, with nothin' wrong exceptin' my leg and a few fingers and one ... gone, and a bit of shrapnel in my back; lots of us have given more for Old England. It's great," he drawled smilingly.

They had reached the gates at Hyde Park Corner, where he paused to shake her hand and thank her in parting.

She stood and watched him hop, now across the wide thoroughfare towards the hospital, then with swift steps she left the Park by the same gate through which he had passed. Her mind was irrevocably made up; this hero, one of many thousands, had decided her. He and his companions had willingly given their all to the country they called "Home," which most of them had never seen

until carried here on stretchers, torn and suffering, uttering no word of complaint, feeling no remorse at sacrificed limbs or senses—it was for England.

For her, too, England must be pre-eminent. The drastic alternative had been offered her between a beloved husband and her country—Joan had chosen.

world, until every German-born man and woman was anathema in the hearts of civilised peoples. Wellrock went serenely on his way, working evil behind the reputation he had built himself for being a philanthropic Englishman, although this could not altogether save him from a certain amount of suspicion, founded solely on the fact that he had been born in Germany. His son on the continent, however, had as his birthplace, had joined his fraternity; Fred and his brother, and learn much that he had to know in their own country in

Joan, too, through her many relatives

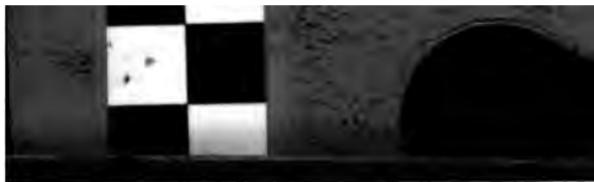
likely to occur in the prosecution of war and politics, and naturally passed all her knowledge on to her husband, in response to his carefully careless questioning.

Lord Sandham had never forgotten Lady Mary's disclosures with regard to her son, but having nothing definite to go on, beyond her word, although he did not doubt it, he continually tried to assure himself that she had exaggerated. He was devoted to his only daughter, and for the sake of her happiness he kept the hints he had received impugning the loyalty of his son-in-law and Wellrock, from Joan's ears. Now here at Wellrock Abbey, where he had come to spend a few days with the radiant little mother and his two-months'-old grandson, Sandham rejoiced that she was happy and tried to turn a deaf ear to the ugly reports regarding her husband and father-in-law that were increasingly filling the air.

His tranquillity was short-lived, for the very afternoon on which he was reassuring his conscience that he had been wise in not disturbing his daughter's peace of mind, the hand of Fate swept her into a vortex of unhappiness from which she was never completely to emerge.

The night before, *The Manatee*, a ship lying off the

g source of information  
rman party. She had so  
oth Services and in of-  
learnt much of what was



## YELLOW SOULS

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coast, had been destroyed by an internal explosion. Most of the lives on board were lost. There was every reason for the strong suspicion that the catastrophe had been engineered through the agency of a German spy.

The homes of many sailors on *The Manatee* were in, and about Lowestoft, and Joan had set off in her governess-cart to pay a round of sympathetic calls on the women folk of the murdered men (for murder it assuredly was). Before she went, she informed her father of her intention.

"Do you think it wise to go alone, my dear?" he inquired.

"Good gracious, yes, Daddie. Why shouldn't it be?" she asked laughingly; "I go everywhere alone when Freddie is not here. Ah! you do not like Freddie," she added quickly, as Lord Sandham frowned. "Poor boy, he is not a general favourite; I think that is one of the reasons I am so fond of him," she stated.

"You are fond of him, Joan?"

"Indeed and indeed I am, Daddie; I love my husband and I adore my beautiful baby," she said happily.

"That is good; then run along on your errand of mercy, my dear," he advised, patting her hand as she leaned over to kiss him before she departed.

She was well known in the district, where hitherto her visits had been eagerly welcomed, but to-day she noticed a changed attitude towards her. At first she attributed this to the distress the people were experiencing over the tragedy. In Corton she descended from her cart and walked down the street, where group after group of these bereaved souls turned coldly from her proffered condolence, ignoring her impulsively extended hand.

A burning patch of crimson sprang to life in either of the young wife's cheeks; her eyes blazed and her firm little chin went up in the air as half a dozen women in whose houses she had always been greeted affectionately fell silent at her approach, deliberately turning their backs on her.

## YELLOW SOULS

"What is the matter? Why do you treat me like this?" Joan, indignantly. Then, as none of them would give an answer, she appealed to them by name. "Mrs. May, what is it? Mrs. White, Mrs. Barns, yes, tell me; I have a right to know."

There was an instant's pause, then big, white-faced Mrs. Shaw turned a countenance, drawn and haggard, with such an aristocrat.

"A right? What right 'ave you come 'ere talkin' to us, us your 'usband's people?" said

"I Joan. "I am Mrs. Scott now."

"We know Mrs. Scott, or Mrs. Schultz, or whatever you like to call yourself. Your 'usband's father is a German, for all 'is English titles, a bad, wicked, spyin' German!"

"You are wrong; it is you who are wicked to dare say such a thing!" cried Joan.

"Wasn't 'is father a German?" asked Mrs. Shaw belligerently.

"His Lordship was born in Germany, I believe, but he has lived here all his life; he is as English as you or I," hotly defended Joan.

"I'll thank you not to class me in with 'im, if you please, Ma'am; I am English, thank God!"

"And so am I, and so is Lord Wellrock, and my husband too," protested the young wife. "You have hurt me most bitterly. You whom I thought my friends! As she spoke Joan turned to leave them, when the voice of another woman in its toneless despair arrested her steps.

"You can't 'elp it, Ma'am, but it is true. 'Is Lordship and 'is son are what Mrs. Shaw calls them; my sister oughter know; she was married to one of them."

"What do you mean, Mrs. May? Are you daring t

mply that your sister was married to either my husband or his father?" Joan turned on the speaker haughtily.

"No, to another German," dully intoned Mrs. May.

"This is all silly nonsense about my husband and his father being Germans," Joan protested.

"Oh, no, it ain't, Ma'am," Mrs. Shaw took up the task of spokeswoman. "We 'ad 'eard it, but 'ardly thought it was true; knowin' 'is Lordship and Mr. Freddie for so many years like, we couldn't believe it, not till Mrs. Wood, as she called 'erself, Mrs. May's sister, died, and hen Mrs. May told us all about it."

"Told you what?" demanded Joan.

"Told us that Wood never was 'er sister's name, it bein' really Schott. 'Er 'avin' been married to a German called that, she took the name of Wood to 'ide 'erself and er disgrace after 'er 'usband 'ad left 'er, and 'er only boy 'ad killed 'imself in jail, where 'e'd been put when 'e vas caught doin' dirty spy work for 'is Lordship. That's what she told us, if you want to know," ended Mrs. Shaw triumphantly.

"What terrible story is this?" Joan asked.

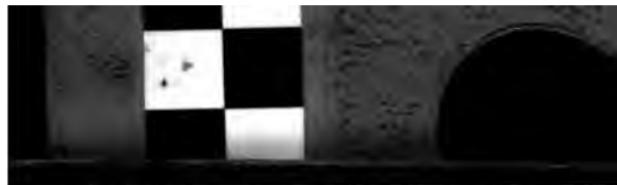
"Tain't no story, Ma'am." Mrs. May spoke dully. "It is all true. It is goin' on ten years now since me ister Bess come back 'ere to me. She walks in—'Aggie,' she ses, 'Aggie, I 'aven't got no 'usband and no son; don't never ask me about them, and from now on I want to be known as Mrs. Wood,' she ses. 'Come in, Bess,' I told er, 'my 'ome is your 'ome,' I ses; 'so long as me and Jim ave a roof over our 'eads, you are welcome to share it,' and I never asked 'er no questions. From time to time he'd tell me a bit. Fair 'eart-breakin' was the times she'd ad, poor Bess! Then when she passed away a fortnight go, she left me a bundle of papers and a letter tellin' me to open the parcel and I'd learn all about what 'ad 'appened; and I did, and there they was, newspaper cuttin's and all, and a long sort of letter Bess 'ad written tellin' ne all about 'er boy and Lord Wellrock, and 'ow kind Lady Mary, 'is Lordship's wife, 'ad been to 'er. I've got

night," scoffed Mrs. Shaw.  
"She can't 'elp it," prot  
more than my poor Bess c  
devils Germans was till sh  
'ere ain't to be blamed fo  
Freddie is. You'd best com  
she suggested kindly to Joa  
stress of emotion from whic  
"No, no," breathed Joan,  
mistaken. Perhaps the los  
—

"If you'd 'eard Bess, if  
wouldn't think there was a  
Mrs. May.

"Not that we 'aven't 'a  
chimed in Mrs. Shaw. "We'  
your 'usband, Ma'am, which  
'ear. 'E's at the bottom of tl  
tee, if you ask me, and ther  
Abbey with signallin' and lig  
significantly.

"You are wrong, you ar  
wicked of you to say these dr  
and his f—."



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heads. I shall tell my husband and his Lordship what you are saying; they will come themselves and prove to you how wrong you are."

"They won't if they value their precious necks," scoffed Mrs. Shaw.

"Not them; they won't face us," chimed in another woman.

"They're right, Ma'am," agreed Mrs. May. "Mr. Freddie and 'is Lordship won't dare show their faces in Lowestoft again."

"What do you say to that?" cried Mrs. Shaw.

"When such a contingency arises I will come myself and tell you what I think." With an immense effort of will, Joan recalled her physical strength and blindly made her way back to the waiting cart.

Of the drive back to Wellrock Abbey she remembered nothing. Then somehow she found herself standing before her father.

"They say Freddie is a German spy; that his father too—"

"My poor child, who told you?" Lord Sandham rose and went quickly to his daughter.

"Freddie, Freddie! do you understand?" she cried frantically.

"Yes, yes, my little girl. I am sorry you should have found out," he soothed, putting his arms round her.

"Found out what?" She wrenched from his embrace. "That my husband and his father are spies? It is not true, it isn't—is it?" she broke off to demand wildly.

Lord Sandham's eyes dropped. He could not bear to face the agony written in his well-loved child's eyes. Then, as the floor seemed to rock beneath her feet, she swayed back and forth. He sprang to her support.

"Come and sit down, Joan dear; you are faint."

As in a trance she let him lead, almost carry her, to a chair, into which she dropped heavily.

"Daddy, do you know what I have been saying to you?

"I tried not to, Joan."

"How long have you been here?"

"I had heard rumours, but

until the day you were married,

"Why did you not tell me?"

"It was too late."

"Too late? You mean you

heard?"

"Yes, dear."

"Why did you not tell me?"

she added.

"I still hoped it might not be true."

"What made you so ready to believe it?"

"The source of my information is not doubt."

"Who told you?" Then, a

she fiercely repeated the question.

"His mother."

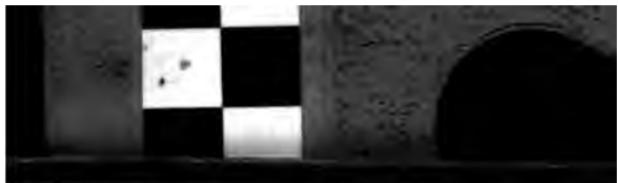
"Aunt Mary?"

For ten minutes Joan sat silent, looking at the floor.

that saw nothing.

"I must go to London at once."

"I must go to London at once."



## YELLOW SOULS

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"You will be more than sorry. You will all go on your knees and beg his forgiveness," she threatened resentfully.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure, Joan; and now, my child, if you insist on taking this journey, I will accompany you," he announced firmly.

Joan made no objection to this decision. An hour later she and her father were travelling swiftly Londonward.

W HILE Joan was talking in Corton, her husband, in the latter's City office, was the increasingly two, of money: the son performed despite his generous allowance was continually demanding sums.

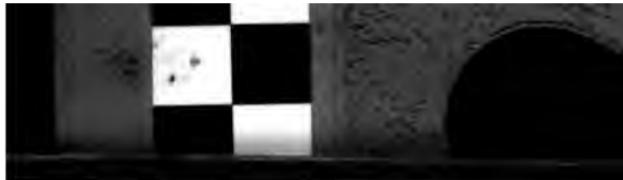
The visit to-day had been moment. Lord Wellrock was n<sup>t</sup> ful, well-nigh invaluable secretary refused to reconsider the resignation tendered.

"No," he had replied, in an persuasiveness, "my mind is n<sup>t</sup> service."

"You tell me you have n<sup>t</sup> neither have you arranged for reason for going, Trent?"

"My younger son, Ronald know—"

"Yes, yes, very sad, Trent. of yours to join up; I told you to condole with her," sighed We



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"My boy will never walk again. Not that he was so badly wounded when taken prisoner, but the treatment he was subjected to by his captors has left him a complete cripple; he was lashed, he was set on by dogs. Now, he who used to love animals, whimpers in terror if a poodle or a cat enters the room. He was starved and left practically naked; when anyone approaches him, even his mother or me, he shrinks in fear; if we raise a hand swiftly he moans; a hastily spoken word or quick step leaves him shaking, trembling, crying. His nerve is broken, his hair is grey; that it what the Germans have done to my boy."

"Very terrible, but it is the fortune of war, you know; we have German prisoners, as well as they have English ones. Again I repeat, I never wanted those splendid lads of yours to join up."

"And much as I have suffered on account of my sons, I would give them again and again and again, and willingly go myself, were I not too old, to beat the people among whom you were born." Trent spoke quietly and grimly.

"Trent, you forget yourself!" admonished Wellrock frowningly.

"On the contrary, I have just come to my senses. I am not a brilliant man and my awakening has been slow, slow but thorough. Never again, so help me God, will I knowingly speak with a German. My son's return has set me thinking. To a German, oaths of allegiance or otherwise are merely means to an end, and are taken solely to serve their own purposes. Many things that have happened since I have been in your employ are coming back to me now. My resignation holds good, I am leaving your service immediately." Without waiting to be dismissed from the banker's presence, or pausing to bid him farewell, Trent walked firmly to the door, closing it quietly after him, and so left the remunerative position he had held for twenty odd years.

It was while Wellrock was inwardly fuming with cha-

grin over the departure of his secretary that his lounged in, and a controversy immediately ensued.

"Five thousand pounds—do you think I am made money?" irritably demanded Wellrock, when Freddie mentioned the sum he must have at once.

"I dunno, but since you put it like that, I have heard said you were made of brass." The cool impertine was me—"

"I re good afternoon," had be Wellrock

"I m have earned it," and Fred settled i nto the arm-chair in which had ens

"As h worth five thou'."

"The .... you should be ample for yo needs; if you choose to take on extra responsibilities yo can find money to pay for them yourself."

"Meaning the kid?"  
"I do not mean your son; I was referring to the e stablishment you have lately set up in Half Moon Street a disgusting and dangerous proceeding with your wife town residence in Park Lane."

"I didn't know you knew of that," remarked Fredd conversationally.

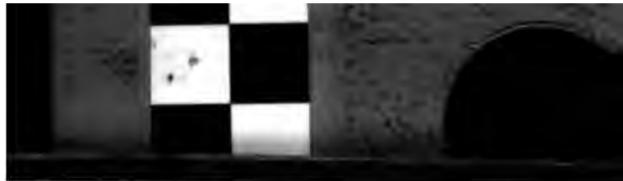
"I know everything, snapped Wellrock.

"Not quite," corrected his son; "for instance, you a wrong in terming my gilded haunt of distraction in Ha Moon Street 'lately set up.' I have had it for years; it only the tenant who changes, the present one is devili expensive, but worth it."

"Your thoughtless foolishness is evident, in havin your wife's home situated a few hundred yards fro that of your mistress," scathingly commented the fathe

"Joan's choice was Park Lane. I did not bring co tamination to her door, she insisted on settling near r front step," yawned Freddie.

"I refuse to give you the sum you ask for."



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"Definite?"

"Definitely."

"Righto, there's lots of ways of raising the necessary." Freddie rose languidly to his feet as he spoke.

"As how?"

"Too many to enumerate; mortgaging my prospects will be easiest," confided the young blackguard.

Freddie won: he left the office with the desired cheque in his pocket and his father's curses on his head. Grinning contentedly, he entered his waiting car, and drove to call on the costly occupant of his house in Half Moon Street; this is where he was while poor little Joan, arriving in London and going direct to Park Lane, was sitting and waiting with a heart full of love for him. For Joan truly loved this unworthy specimen of mankind. Such cases form interesting studies for psychologists.

She knew nothing of his perfidy; even had she done so, it is doubtful whether her disgust for his transgressions would have killed her love for the man to whom she had completely given her heart. He and their baby comprised her world. She thought of her baby boy now; it was the first time she had left him for more than an hour. The adored wee thing had been asleep when she left Wellrock Abbey; she had risked waking him with a gentle kiss.

"He really is like his father, don't you think?" she had whispered to the capable nurse who had charge of the treasured babe.

Her thoughts passed from the infant to its father, her poor, maligned husband. She went over their courtship and hasty marriage. That New Year's Eve at the café in Paris recurred to her; she started as though someone had struck her, as the incidents of that night disclosed themselves before her mind. Freddie's indignant destruction of the grotesque portrayal of the Kaiser, his set, white face of displeasure as he had cast the fruit away, the instant's pause, followed by confused cries of: "*Laissez, laissez, il est un Allemand,*" "*Bravo l'Allemand,*" "*A bas*

*les Allemands," "Mettez à la porte," "Non, non, chau pour son pays."*

She tried to put that night and its happenings from her, and when she failed, assured herself that it was nothing. Those were pre-war times; anyone might have acted as Freddie had. Objecting to ridiculing Royal even though it had been the now hated Kaiser, did not prove the objector German. Had it been Italy's king or Spain the same within him, he would have behaved differently? Something persisted.

Of course furthermore she ran into seen a lot pictures. Of course she had seen engravings of all the sovereigns and even one of the Kaiser; yes, here was one of Italy's King and here the King of Norway, and yes, one of Wilhelm—two, three of the same diabolic countenance, with its upturned mustaches. Passionately Joan tore two representations of the German monarch into shreds and tossed them aside taking one portrait of the evil man and other kings' pictures, she returned to her own sitting-room, just as her husband entered the house.

It was a little after six o'clock. Joan subconsciously wished it had been earlier or much later, for between these hours of six and eight o'clock she had often noticed a curious change come over Freddie; he became rude, restless, uneasy, very pragmatic, or equally taciturn. Generally he slipped away by himself; doubtless his reason for returning to his home now, was in order to be alone.

Throwing the pictures on the table, she ran to the door to call him, but he had disappeared. Joan rang the bell. "Is Mr. Scott in?" she asked the butler who answered her summons.

"Just come in, Ma'am."

"Tell him I am here and wish to see him," she ordered. Then, struck by the excitement which the well-trained servant was endeavouring to suppress: "What is the matter?" she inquired.

"Beg pardon, Ma'am, there is a rumour about that the Kaiser's been assassinated," he informed her.

"I wonder if it is true," cried Joan.

"Don't know, Ma'am; it is in the evening papers," he remarked hopefully, as he retired to do her bidding.

"Hullo, Joan, what brings you up to town?" Freddie greeted her as he entered the room.

"Oh, Freddie, aren't you pleased to see me?" she asked as she held her face up to be kissed.

"Course I am; what's the latest?" he inquired casually, brushing her soft cheek with his lips.

"Haven't you heard?" she asked, forcing a smile and determining to break the horrible scandal about himself to her husband slowly and carefully. In order that he should not see how it had affected her, she would discuss the news of the day with him first.

"No, what is it?" he asked indifferently, stretching his arms above his head and yawning widely.

"The Kaiser has been assassinated," she told him triumphantly.

The effect of her smiling information put cold fear into her heart; for the first time, she doubted his loyalty. So long as she lived, she would always see him as he appeared at that moment. The yawn in which he was indulging ceased, yet his mouth remained agape. With arms still extended, his eyes came down to hers, his face went livid.

"It isn't true," he squealed; "damn you, it isn't true!"

"Freddie!" she fell back aghast.

"Who told you; how do you know?" he demanded domineeringly.

"It is a rumour that has got into the papers, I believe," replied Joan quietly.

Freddie sprang to a bell, rang, ordered the evening

"Kid ill or something?"  
about the room.

"No, baby is very well,"  
for her news: "They are say  
German spies." She came t  
hesitation.

"Who says so?" he deman  
reply.

"The people in Lowestoft."  
"Which ones?"

"The women folk of the M  
"Oh, them! they don't cour  
ing his interrupted walk.

"But, Freddie, it is a ter  
think."

"Nobody will take any notic  
assured her carelessly.

"It hurt me to hear them sa  
him wistfully.

"Then don't listen."

"That is not very kind," prote  
"My dear girl, what do you  
asked belligerently. "Some low...

you, there is no need to reassure me," she told him proudly.

"Then what is all the fuss about?" His irritability was increasing.

"I want you to come back with me to Lowestoft and tell these poor souls they are mistaken."

"Not on your life," scoffed Freddie. "Let them say what they like, it can't affect me; what proof have they got?"

"None—how could they have?" she asked indignantly after a moment's thought.

For five minutes she tried gently to persuade him to accompany her back to Wellrock Abbey.

"Oh, chuck it, Joan, I'm fed, see you later," he put an end to the discussion by declaring, as he swung himself out of the room, leaving his wife alone with her disturbing thoughts, which pendulated between doubt and faith.

At one moment a fierce contempt for herself assailed her, in that she could experience an instant's distrust of her husband; then the same emotion was turned in his direction.

Proof—he asked what proof they had, not what reason for suspecting him, but what proof. Of course he was innocent of the accusation brought against him, then as he would not defend himself, she must do it for him. Poor Freddie, it was a wicked shame.

Wearily she picked up the pictures she had brought from his den, and holding them in her hand, she walked towards the door, meaning to restore them to their original case. The sudden entrance of her husband brought her to a stand-still.

His face had resumed its livid aspect, his mouth was twitching, his eyes were reduced to mere slits; in his trembling hands he held the torn pieces to which she had reduced the Kaiser's pictures.

"Who did this?" he interrogated furiously.

"I did," she quickly claimed.

"I shall."

"You will not."

Suddenly she recollecte  
furiouly she displayed one  
ing each into four pieces. I  
quickly, but making no move  
until she arrived at the repr  
Emperor.

"Stop!" he yelled.

"I will not," she answered, :  
she ripped the thing in two.

Freddie, who had sprung fo  
to arrest her action, was too  
descended, striking her stinging.  
again he struck her.

"Why should you care what  
such an evil fiend?" she cried.

"By God, when he is ruling  
for those words!" he squeale  
pletely gone. Once more he st  
the two halves of the Kaiser's  
room.

Joan did not know she had h

noises emanated from her throat, then she fell full length on the floor, not unconscious, but completely exhausted.

Presently her youthful strength asserted itself, and she struggled to her feet. All her blind fury had vanished, she was deadly calm. With hands that felt like lead, she resumed the hat and coat she had discarded on entering the house a few hours ago; steadily she walked down the stairs, out through the front door, and crossing the street, entered the deserted Park.

She must be alone and think this out. Mechanically her feet propelled her body; round and round in a circle she went.

Freddie, her husband, was a German. She no longer doubted the Lowestoft women's stories, nor her father's hints. Freddie, whom she had loved, no, *did* love; this trait in him she abhorred, but he himself as she had always thought of him, her husband, the father of her baby, she still loved.

She felt her cheek grow damp, and touching it found blood on her hand. Vaguely she wondered how she had managed to cut her face; so great was her mental stress that her husband's brutal attack had not yet penetrated her consciousness.

For hours she paced Hyde Park, wondering (as his mother had so often done) what she was to do. Could she betray Freddie? She shuddered from the thought, her heart yearned towards him no, no, a thousand times no, she was his wife. If all the world turned against him she must stand staunch and share his fate.

"Beg pardon, miss, could you tell me the shortest way to St. George's Hospital?" a voice accosted her.

"Oh!" her overstrung nerves forced a little cry of fear from her lips. By the dim light of the misty moon she recognised the speaker as a tall, slim, wounded Australian soldier, his khaki overcoat partially hiding the blue which makes every observer kind to the wearer; he was minus a leg, and leaned heavily on his crutches. "Yes, of

course, just straight down through the gates and across the road," she directed.

"Ta, sorry to have startled you, but I'm a bit lame and I don't know my way about Blighty," he explained.

"No trouble at all, nothing could be that we stay-at-homes could do for you splendid men who have fought for us," she said warmly. "Come, I will show you the way."

"We've o  
he deprecate  
clumsily alo

"You are  
lief at the ex  
pected interl

"It's grea  
which every Australian w... lise in appreciative de  
scription of that which pleases him, be it country, picture  
palace, horse-race, feast, girl, comrade or view. "We  
always speak of England as 'home,' 'down under' where  
I come from."

"You have proved your devotion," she commented, indicating his crutches.

"Meaning my leg, that's nothin'. My oath, I'm one of the lucky ones. Here I am goin' back to Australia in a few weeks, with nothin' wrong exceptin' my leg and a few fingers and one ... gone, and a bit of shrapnel in my back; lots of us have given more for Old England. It's great," he drawled smilingly.

They had reached the gates at Hyde Park Corner, where he paused to shake her hand and thank her in parting.

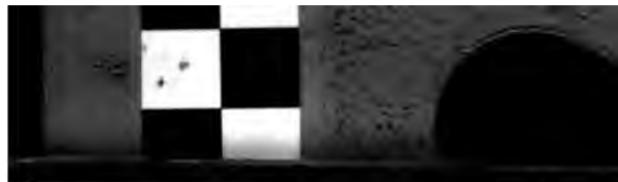
She stood and watched him hop across the wide thoroughfare towards the hospital, then with swift steps she left the Park by the same gate through which he had passed. Her mind was irrevocably made up; this hero, one of many thousands, had decided her. He and his companions had willingly given their all to the country they called "Home," which most of them had never seen

it for the old country  
ing voice as he hoppe

she asked, feeling a re  
ughts which this uneas

mploying the expression

which every Australian w... lise in appreciative de  
scription of that which pleases him, be it country, picture  
palace, horse-race, feast, girl, comrade or view. "We  
always speak of England as 'home,' 'down under' where  
I come from."



## YELLOW SOULS

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until carried here on stretchers, torn and suffering, uttering no word of complaint, feeling no remorse at sacrificed limbs or senses—it was for England.

For her, too, England must be pre-eminent. The drastic alternative had been offered her between a beloved husband and her country—Joan had chosen.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

IT was ten o'clock when Joan entered the Belgravia Hospital. Before she had time to inquire whether Lady Mary or Marigold were still there, the latter, in walking attire, came hurriedly into the hall.

"Joan, my dear child, what are you doing here at this time?" she inquired, as she kissed her half-brother's wife affectionately.

"I must speak with you at once, Marigold. Something dreadful has happened," explained Joan.

"Certainly. Come in here."

Putting her arm round the little figure, Marigold led her into the small private room at the rear of the hospital, where Lady Mary was busy putting on her walking shoes and coat.

"What is the matter with your face, Joan?" inquired Lady Mary, after she had silently embraced her daughter-in-law.

"I don't know. Oh!" It suddenly dawned on Joan how it was her face had been hurt. "It is nothing," she said. "I must tell you both what I have come to say."

"We were just tearing home, darling. Major Tanqueray, you remember Tubby, he was a great friend of Dickie's, has telephoned through to know if he could see me. He has just got back to England from Germany, where he was a prisoner at Sholberg. That is where Dickie is, you know. Tubby has escaped. As he is going off to Scotland early to-morrow and wanted to see me, I told him to go to Eaton Place to-night. Mammie and I were just off. But, my poor darling, your face is in a terrible state."

"I won't keep you long," promised Joan, "but I must

tell you what has happened." For a moment Joan's strength almost deserted her. She lay back in her chair, the contusions serving to show up the deathly pallor of her face. The great dark circles round her eyes struck consternation in the hearts of her relatives. Lady Mary and Marigold insisted on bathing the bruised face, and on Joan swallowing a cup of coffee, and she then briefly told them all that had happened from the time the Lowestoft women had voiced their suspicions up to the present moment.

Lady Mary folded the girl in a tender embrace.

"My poor little daughter! My poor little thing!" she petted tenderly.

"But it is all so wicked, so wrong. I know Freddie has very grave faults, but this hideous thing can't be true!" protested Marigold, aghast.

"Yes, it is," asserted Lady Mary, sadly.

"You have known it for a long time, Aunt Mary?" whispered Joan.

"For years, dear."

"Mammie! of course, it all sounds very terrible, but there must be some explanation. I am sure of it. You see, we have all become more or less nervy, and apt to be suspicious of all sorts of people, especially those who have a drop of German blood in their veins; but Father Frederick and my own brother Freddie—oh, no, it is impossible!"

"So I tried to argue for years, Marigold," admitted her mother.

"Poor Mammie" (Marigold was still unconvinced). "But, darling, although I know the Germans have been terribly cruel, remembering them as they were when I was living among them, I cannot associate the things they do now with the people I met, any more than I can really believe that Freddie and father are spies, German spies. It is too awful," she shuddered.

"It is too terrible," agreed Joan. "I am hoping this is a nightmare from which I shall soon awaken;" she sighed.

"You will stop with me to-night, Joan?" Marigold decided, as the three women entered the taxi-cab which had been sent for to drive them the short distance to Eaton Place.

"Please, Marigold, if I may," Joan replied.

In complete silence they journeyed to Eaton Place, where Lady Mary took charge of her daughter-in-law, helping the exhausted girl to undress, and tucking her into bed.

Marigold had gone direct to the drawing-room, where Major Tanqueray awaited her.

"Sorry to pay you such a late visit, but I only got back this afternoon, Lady Marigold, and I rang you up the first available minute," apologised the gaunt, haggard wreck of the erstwhile rotund Tubby Tanqueray.

"Don't apologise," begged Marigold. "You know how ardently I long for news of Dickie."

"News of Dickie?" Major Tanqueray looked puzzled.

"Yes, yes, you were in Sholberg, were you not?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is where Dickie is. Surely you know that?"

"No, I did not."

"But surely . . . how on earth could you both be in the same camp and not know it?"

"We were not."

"But Dickie *is* there."

"I beg your pardon, he is not."

"Why . . . why, I know he is."

"How do you know?"

"I get letters from him, I write to him, I send him parcels."

"Good Lord, am I going daft?"

"No, of course not. I suppose it is possible for prisoners to be in the same camp and not meet," suggested Marigold, who secretly began to wonder with him if the sufferings through which he had gone might not have left his mind a little unbalanced.

"Not in Sholberg, or any other camp, for such a length of time as I was there," asserted Major Tanqueray; "besides . . ."

"Besides what?" asked Marigold, as he hesitated.

"This is most painful, my dear lady, but I thought you would have heard long ago."

"Heard what?"

"That Dickie was killed."

"You thought he was killed," she corrected quickly. "So did I for months and months, then suddenly I heard he was in Sholberg."

"This is most extraordinary. I can assure you you are wrong."

"Nonsense," she snapped rudely. "I tell you Dickie *is* there, and to prove it I will show you his letters." She ran rapidly to a desk in the room, unlocked a drawer and pulled out a bundle of letters. "There," she cried triumphantly, "look at these. Now do you still say he is not there?"

"I do."

"Really, Major Tanqueray, I cannot understand you," confessed Marigold impatiently.

"Nor can I understand what all this means. Dickie is dead. He was blown practically to pieces alongside me the day I was wounded and taken prisoner," announced Major Tanqueray gravely.

"It is not true. For your own sake I would advise you to be more careful in your statements," admonished Marigold harshly, the icy hand of fear that clutched her heart making her impervious to any hurt she might inflict on her visitor by her insinuation.

"I am sorry, Lady Marigold, but I am certain of what I say. The details I could supply would be too painful."

"But . . . but, if you are so sure, how then do you account for these letters?" she inquired pitifully.

"Only one way."

"And that is . . . ?"

"The work of spies," he determined grimly.

"Impossible! Look at these letters. Look at Dickie's handwriting. Take them, read them. They mention our children by name, our friends, his horses, dogs, some of our servants. How could German spies know these details?" she demanded exultantly.

"They are the craftiest devils in the world. I have not spent two years in a prison camp among them without realising their cunning evil. What first made you think Dickie was alive?"

"I heard it—a telegram from Switzerland, from a man called Tautz."

"To you?"

"No, to my step-father."

"Wellrock, eh?" A gleam of quick comprehension shone in his eyes.

Marigold noted it.

"You can't . . . you don't think . . . ?" She did not finish her questions. She, too, was thinking. What if, after all, her mother and Joan were correct in their accusations, that her step-father, who after all had been born a German, was a spy?

"I do not want to wound you unnecessarily, but I have had cause to wonder about Wellrock for a long time," he confessed slowly.

"Why?"

"Many things. For one, you remember Dickie's patent?"

"The one for the short quick-firing rifle? . . . yes."

"Wellrock submitted it, or so he said, to the British War Office, who turned it down. That identical gun was one of the most efficient weapons the Germans used against us at the beginning of war. I managed to find out while I was in Sholberg that the first appearance of that gun tallied closely with the date Wellrock returned Dickie his patent, with a politely discouraging letter. It made me think a bit, more especially as the inventor's name is a mystery in Germany. By the way, does Wellrock still write to Hillrose?"

"Yes, and often send him parcels. Here is one now. He left it, as he generally does, for me to address. It should have gone some days ago."

"May we open it?" inquired Tanqueray, regarding the carefully packed bundle she indicated.

"Certainly." Picking up a pair of scissors, Marigold cut the firmly knotted string, and tearing away the wrappings, disclosed a suit of speckled tweed clothing and various other garments.

"He is always writing for clothes, poor Dickie. I kept this parcel back in order to enclose a scarf my little daughter has been making for her father," she remarked.

Major Tanqueray was busily examining the garments. He felt them all over with extreme care, then minutely inspected each garment.

"Ah, look here," he cried at last, holding up the coat.

"That is the coat," was Marigold's superfluous remark.

"Just so, and this, if I am not mistaken, is the Morse code worked in thread. By Jove, that's a cunning idea! Look at it," he cried.

"It can't be. That is only the curious pattern of the material," protested Marigold, taking the proffered garment and attentively inspecting it.

"No, I am sure it is the Morse code. This may prove of great use to our own Secret Service," he remarked. "I advise you to beware of Wellrock. It is not a pleasant thing to say to anyone about a relative, but I do say it to you," he remarked gravely.

"And . . . my . . . Dickie? . . ."

"I can assure you I saw him killed with my own eyes. I was awfully cut up about it; he was my closest friend."

"But how could this deception continue so long?" she pleaded desperately.

"Easily. Wellrock would supply them with a specimen of Dickie's handwriting, at the same time mentioning the names of the children, your friends, etc. Sholberg was well chosen, for no prisoners ever come back from there unless they escape, as I have done, so a con-

spirator would be safe from detection on that score. The Germans are artful brutes, I assure you."

"Is it possible such a fiend exists?" she gasped painfully, as a full realisation of Wellrock's craftiness dawned on her. "To lie deliberately to me about my husband in order to use me for his vile plots . . . !"

"I am afraid that is what has been happening. Believe me, I would sooner have died in Sholberg than cause you this suffering," he assured her sadly.

"No, no, it is better I should know. You can imagine what this means to me, so I am sure you will forgive my selfishness in not having congratulated you on your escape, or asked you about yourself. Perhaps on your return from Scotland you will come and see me; but now I have much to do, so I must ask you to excuse me."

"Of course; I understand. I am only sorry to be the cause of such a grievous awakening. Anything I can do you know you have only to tell me," he assured her earnestly before he departed.

Half an hour later Marigold stood face to face with her step-father in his library.

"My dear child, what brings you here at this hour?" asked Wellrock, using almost the identical words with which Marigold had greeted Joan an hour or so ago.

"To tell you that I have found you out, that now I know you for what you are."

"Really, Marigold, I do not understand."

"Then I will make you. I have come because I have discovered you lied to me about my husband, that you told me he was alive in order that you might use his name, and me, to assist you in your nefarious work for Germany. . . ."

"That is not true. I cannot permit you to say such a thing," protested Wellrock, with a fine show of indignation.

"You shall not prevent me saying all that I have in mind to say, first of all to you, and later to the proper authorities." Her hard, grim determination was evi-

dent. "You ruined my mother's life, marrying her in order to further your own ends. Her birth and name were useful to you. That she should mother your despicable little spy brat was part of your fiendish machinations. God be thanked, Joan has discovered the true nature of the specimen she married, and will show him no more mercy than I intend displaying towards you, any more than you have shown me, by using my heart as a pawn in your game."

"You are crazy. If, as I gather, you have heard Hillrose is dead, I can only ask you to wait until we can learn the truth."

Her laugh caused even this hardened ruffian to wince.

"The truth through you, I suppose? Such a thing could not emanate. It will curtail this interview, and relieve me of your presence a little sooner, if you will remain silent. Nothing you could do or say would alter my opinion or my intentions. Many of your evil plots stand out clearly before me now that my eyes have been opened to your vileness. You cannot lead people to think my reason is tottering, as you attempted to with my mother. You cannot discredit me with shameful publicity, as you did her. You can neither frighten nor persuade me to remain silent. I have come to-night to tell you this, so that you may end your own life, and advise your contemptible son to do likewise. This is not out of consideration for either of you, but for my mother's sake. If you do not follow my advice, God have mercy on you, for I will have none. I will give you till to-morrow morning. If you are alive then, no power on earth shall save you from the fate you so richly deserve. I regret you must die so soon. I would like you to have lived a little longer, in order to suffer some of the pain you have inflicted on so many, taking no risk yourself. Even a German soldier, bestial as he has proved himself to be, one might find excuses for, but for you, and things like you, who worm their way into our lives, gaining power over weaklings, with vulpine art discovering fail-

ings and trading on them, there is only loathing and contempt. The oath of allegiance you take is blasphemy. There is no health or cleanliness in you.

"The nation built on so foul and unstable a foundation, with such ones as you for its heirs, must crumble and fall into decay, despised by all, regretted by none. The greatest punishment we could inflict on Germany would be to send her back all you yellow English, for wherever you are there will exist rottenness and corruption.

"You, with your professions of affection for my mother and for me! Your tender solicitude for my husband! Spy! German Spy!"

Marigold had spoken in a tense, even tone. Not once had she raised her voice, even when Wellrock attempted to interrupt her. The low equable quality was retained to the end. Now she ceased speaking.

"How like your mother you are!" Wellrock mused aloud.

It is doubtful whether Marigold heard him. She turned and walked towards the door. Instead of going direct to it, she swerved to the left. Her eyes had glimpsed the large scarlet volume with its gold embossed lettering, from which Freddie had been learning that night many years ago, when she had intruded in this very room. Now, taking the book from its shelf, she opened, glanced at it, and with a hard, contemptuous little laugh, dropped it on the floor, passing out of the room with never another word or glance at Wellrock, who all this time had been sitting huddled in his chair.

Even after she had left the house, her stinging words vibrated through the room.

Slowly, heavily, Wellrock rose to his feet. His brain, that carefully trained machine, was working busily.

All his plans had been made some days previously. His step-daughter's warning only accelerated his movements.

Having heard he was to be called to give evidence in the trial of one Terence Palmer, who had assaulted and maimed Gustav Lemberg, Wellrock had decided to dis-

appear from England and spend his remaining days in Germany.

The Morse code message Major Tanqueray had discovered worked into the coat was an intimation to the effect that he would be waiting at Glenalla, the small village on the Irish coast, from a certain date (which was yet some time off) for an arranged signal, intimating that a submarine was near at hand to pick him up, take him on board and convey him to Germany.

He sneered, as he made his few final preparations for departure, at the thought of Marigold's threats. So he was to die at once? Not he! He loved his life, and was not so easily going to relinquish it. He had worked hard for the Fatherland (and incidentally for himself). Now he would go there and enjoy many more years of wealth and prosperity.

Calmly and swiftly he gathered together the few papers that were still unpacked, thrusting them into a bag he had in readiness. The brightly burning fire in the open grate proved a handy receptacle for documents he deemed better destroyed.

Grey dawn was breaking when silently he left the house, walking hurriedly towards Oxford Street, along Tottenham Court Road, towards Euston Station.

As he had come to London, so he was leaving it, on foot, with the spiteful hate he had engendered in his heart for England and its people the more bitter from forty odd years of careful nutriment.

## CHAPTER XXXV

IT was drink-sodden Mr. Kerrigan who greeted Lord Wellrock on his arrival in Glenalla. In this ruffian the fugitive, to a certain extent, was compelled to confide in order to gain sympathy and help, both of which he gave in abundance when he learned that his Lordship was flying from the English.

"Sure ye can hoide in the caves beyant there as snug as a bug in a rug, where the bloody English 'll niver foind ye, not if they search from now to kingdom come," Mr. Kerrigan assured the fugitive.

During the ensuing days of weary waiting, his Lordship had serious reasons to envy the insect comfortly en-sconced in fleecy wrappings, for the caves were cold and gloomy. The coverings supplied him were foul-smelling and thin, his food insufficient and coarse. This last trial was a bad one for the pampered banker to bear. He spoke severely to Mr. Kerrigan when that worthy visited him for the ostensible purpose of "passin' the toime of day, and bringin' cheer and comfort to the sowl," in reality to extort more money.

"Not enough to ate do ye say now? Sure, your honour, toimes is hard. It's meself is shtarvin' oi'm tellin' ye, oi niver get a mout'ful to ate barrin' pratees, and begorra oi don't git thim. Here am oi riskin' me loife and me liberty be bringin' ye the fat av the land and ye do be grumblin'; whirra, whirra, ye're a hard gintleman to plaze intoirely. Sure ye do be forgettin' we're at war. Oi've spint me last fardin' buyin' and procurin' this iligent pace av pork and eggs, not forgittin' the bread out av which oi do be chatin' me own stummick now, so ate

hearty and give praise to the Lord and don't go overlookin' that vittels is not aisy come by and costs money, the which, if oi may make so bowld as to remoind ye're honour, oi've not got, nor possessed av."

And so, intermittently attended to by the loquacious Mr. Kerrigan, Lord Wellrock existed, watching night and day for the delayed signal until his thoughts turned bitter towards the Fatherland, which had apparently deserted him now that his career of activity on its behalf was ended.

That he had abandoned the Lembergs, young Schott, and various other dependents in the like manner never entered his mind. His sympathies were entirely devoted to himself. Even the tragic news regarding his son and grandson stirred no tender emotion in the piscine-blooded individual.

It was a short paragraph which appeared in the papers regarding Freddie and his baby son that Wellrock came across in a journal brought him by Mr. Kerrigan.

Freddie had felt no remorse for the brutality to which he had subjected his wife. His glowering unreasonable resentment against her remained stubbornly with him, even after a night's rest. The letter he received from Joan early the next morning increased his ire.

"DEAR FREDDIE" (it ran),

"Now that I know the bitter truth regarding you, I cannot remain passive. Here is my ultimatum. Much as I love you I can never again be your wife, but the sacred oath I swore to cling to you for better for worse so long as we both live, with God's help I shall keep.

"Will you come away to some sheltered country spot with me and consent to the continual companionship of myself and one or two men whom I shall engage, nominally as your secretaries? Will you swear never to leave the place we choose as our home so long as this war lasts?

"If not, my only alternative will be to go direct to the authorities and tell them the truth, cruelly hard as it will be.

"I beg of you from the bottom of my heart, for my sake,

for the sake of our little son, to agree to my proposition.  
If you will not, then, my husband, good-bye.

"Your loving wife,  
"JOAN."

After reading this epistle Freddie swore many vicious oaths. His eyelids drooped ominously. His crafty brain schemed.

He must act immediately. Joan would have gone back to Wellrock Abbey to the kid. He would follow her there, humbly apologise, and persuade her she had been wrong. Beg of her to forgive him for his behaviour. Tell her he had been drinking to drown his unhappiness at being separated from her, he alone in London while she and the child remained in the country.

After telephoning a message to be given to his chief to explain his absence, Freddie started off for Lowestoft. Arriving there, he experienced a sense of irritation at having neglected to wire for a conveyance to meet him. With bad grace, he hailed a station hack, directing the coachman to drive to Wellrock Abbey.

His thoughts were busy.

"By God, I will make the little Hell-cat suffer for her damned impudent proposition to put warders over me! She can look out for herself when once I have her soothed down."

As the carriage rumbled through Corton, a hoarse shriek roused him to a sudden realisation of impending trouble. The vehicle in which he was seated had stopped with a jerk. Round him were black-clad women with tear-stained, scarlet faces.

These were the widows and mothers of the *Manatee* sailors, returning from an inquest which had been held on some of the recovered corpses of their men.

It was Mrs. Shaw who had recognised him. In a moment he was dragged from the carriage.

"You'd drown our men, would you, you fiend? You'd sell them, you dirty little swine? You'd betray the coun-

try you was born in, would you, you German, German?" she screamed hoarsely.

Struggling and kicking in a vain effort to free himself, he was borne swiftly along by the poor creatures, who, crazy with grief, thirsted for vengeance.

"Over the cliffs with him. If drowning's good enough for our men it's good enough for him as sold them for blood-money," cried one of the mob.

No one of the rapidly increasing crowd interfered as Freddie, gasping, kicking, fighting, squealing, threatening, pleading, was borne swiftly along in the arms of the brawny women in their new mourning garb.

"I didn't; it wasn't me, it was my father. I'll give you a thousand pounds, five thousand pounds, I swear I will. I'll have you hanged for this. Let me go, you murderers. I'm English. It was my father, I tell you," he sobbed disjointedly.

Grimly, inexorably, he was carried on and on towards the threatening cliffs.

"For Christ's sake don't kill me. I can't die. Think of my wife, think of my child. I can't die, I can't die; have mercy!" he screamed.

"The mercy you showed to ours we'll show you, you German spy," was the only response his wailing elicited.

The goal was reached.

"Oh, you can't, you can't; it's murder! For God Almighty's sake, spare me, spare me, you devils, you fiends. Oh-h-h!"

A swift whirling of arms and legs as the jettisoned form revolved wildly in the air carried Freddie's cowardly shrieks into oblivion.

The *Manatee* victims were avenged.

All unconscious of her husband's fate, Joan had wired for her baby to be brought immediately to her in London. It was nine o'clock that night when a sobbing, distracted nurse, accompanied by a special constable, fell on the floor before the waiting mother and hysterically

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blurted out the awful story of her arrival at the London station with the babe, of her fears and presentiments on hearing the guns and learning that an air raid was in progress, of the piece of shrapnel that had struck her and the child, killing the tiny boy instantly.

It was a brief account of these two deaths which Wellrock read with callous unconcern in his hiding-place in Glenalla. His son had served the purpose for which he had been born, therefore his death did not matter. As for the brat, its existence had always been a matter of complete indifference to its paternal grandfather. The news of the double tragedy was overshadowed by other information Mr. Kerrigan brought, to the effect that strange men had arrived in Glenalla, asking for Lord Wellrock.

"Arrah, now don't ye be gettin' onaisy. It's meself will protect your honour wid me loife whin they foind ye, which they niver will, for divil a wan knows ye're here beyant meself. Ye can live an' doi here in comfort and saycrecy, and no wan be a bit the woiser, and it's better ye should doi of starvation, as it's loikely ye will do, for it's Hell and roit to come be a bit av somt'ing to ate these dishtresshful toimes—and the money it costs; man dear, oi'm tellin' you the truth, it's loike askin' for Hivin itself to troy and boy bread. What wid the bloody English, to say nothin' of the sanguinary Germans, askin' ye're honour's pardon, we're betwane and betwixt the divil and the dape say. But oi'll say to it ye stharve sooner than them divils git ahount of ye. Bad 'cess to 'em, ses oi. Sure ye're a rale gentleman and oi'll drink yer health wid it," spitting on the coin Wellrock presented him with. "Now oi'll wish ye good avenin'. Ye can shlape aisy. Meself's the bhoy fer tact and discraytion. Oi'll put 'em off the sint, niver you fear. Danny Kerrigan's aqual to an arrmy of them foreign English divils," with which cheering counsel the self-styled tactician departed, leaving Wellrock a prey to uneasy fears and an empty stomach.

On the morning of this tragic day of happenings for poor Joan, Marigold, after calling at Berkeley Square and learning that his Lordship was not in and had not slept in his bed there, went direct to Whitehall, where, with deadly calm, she interviewed officials to whom she exposed the duplicity of her step-father, exhorting them to act quickly, in order to prevent the spy from escaping.

At every port watchers were immediately on the alert, but no trace of the missing man was found. Suddenly Marigold remembered the Morse code message Major Tanqueray had discovered worked into the tweed coat destined for Germany.

The translation of the dots and dashes denoted the whereabouts of the fugitive.

The three men who arrived in Glenalla in search of the spy were derided and bamboozled on every side.

"The only shtranger we've had hereabouts and in the vicinity is a donkey wid wan bloind oi; maybe it's him ye're lookin' for?" they were politely informed.

Declining to accept the assurances of the inhabitants, the English Secret Police doggedly searched Glenalla and its surroundings. On the third day, having reluctantly concluded that their man must have escaped, they were on the point of returning with their mission unfulfilled, when the intervention of a raw-boned, bare-legged colleen, through whose shock of red hair which fell over a pale, freckled face, shone two eyes big and bright with savage hate, caused them to change their minds.

"Whist now, is it goin' ye are?" she hissed, obtruding her head round the door of the room in which the three were seated, discontentedly acknowledging themselves beaten.

"We are, my dear; will you break your heart?" jested Lambert, the lady-killer of the party.

"Shure oi moight if there was a mahm among ye!" retorted the girl.

"You got it in the neck that time, Tony," roared Detective Flint.

"Shut up; the girl might know something," admonished Sergeant-Detective Locket. "Come in, Miss," he invited.

"None av ye're blarney wid me av ye plaze; oi'm no 'Miss,' oi'm Kat'leen O'Connor at ye're service," she told them, accepting the invitation to enter.

"Then, Kathleen, will you tell us what you want, if your visit was not paid for the pleasure of gazing into Mr. Lambert's blue eyes?" quizzed Locket.

"Lave him be, the gossoon; sorra a mahn av ye can help bein' born wid the face the good Lord curses some of ye wid; but wid all he's so foine-lookin' he's no temptation to me. Oi've been rared decent," Irish Kathleen declared virtuously.

"Then you just came to have a friendly chat with us, eh?" inquired Locket.

"Devil a bit. Me pa ses the English is a lousy lot, and oi belave him. Oi've no wish to waste me toime talkin' wid the loikes of you; the sooner the place is quit of ye the better oi'll be plased. The raison of me condescension in talkin' to ye at all at all is to warn ye to take that blay-guard wid ye."

"Who?" Locket was the keen detective immediately.

"Who but the devil ye've been lookin' for?" she scoffed.

"He is here, then?"

"An' where else should he be? Oi've watched ye goin' adjacent and alongside of the consayled murderin' thafe twinty toimes since ye've been in Glenalla. Begob, thinks oi, there's no knowin' but they may turn out to be rale min wan av these foine days, whin they've had some larnin', but it will not be this soide of the pearly gates of Hivin that they'll be sazed wid intelligence, so oi'd better shtep in and take a hand, ses oi to meself, ses oi."

"That is very kind of you, Kathleen. Now if you will

tell us where Lord Wellrock is secreted, we will relieve you of our presence at once, and his too, and in due time you shall be rewarded," promised Locket.

"Rayward is it? Rayward!" she flashed. "Thin if it's a rayward ye'll be givin' me it'll be killin' the black baste who is hoidin' down yonder in the caves behoind Mount Grady Hill. Here before me oies oi'd have him kilt, loike he and the other divils kilt me brudder Patsy. God rist his sowl in Hivin," she added, piously crossing herself.

In silence the men listened while Kathleen told them of Wellrock's first visit to Glenalla, of the "chuckie pen," through the medium of which German submarines obtained petrol, and so were able to loiter about the Channel. On one of the boats they destroyed, her beloved brother, Patsy, had worked as a sailor until he was drowned, since which time Irish Kathleen had longed for revenge. Now in part she was obtaining it, at the risk of the contumely she was well aware would be heaped on her fiery head for giving information to English police.

Wellrock was lying inert, gazing seaward, ever gazing out to sea. He heard footsteps approaching, but did not turn, anticipating his visitor to be the only one who ever appeared to him, the drunken Mr. Kerrigan.

His unshaven face went livid as he realised he was under arrest; then his eyes shifted from side to side, searching vainly for a means of escape. His quietly alert captors were too well prepared for any ruse of the desperate man's to succeed.

On the journey to Dublin, and so across to England, Wellrock furtively offered fabulous sums as bribes if his jailers would give him an opportunity to disappear. Later, when faced with this evidence, he blandly and unhesitatingly denied it; not that such a trivial piece of data was deemed of consequence.

In the private room at the Admiralty where the special inquiry was convened Wellrock pitted every cunning de-

vice of which his evil brain was capable to refute the charges brought against him.

The advocate whom he had been given permission to retain had little to do but sit and look wise, for his client made his own defence, pointing out with suave acumen that the accusations cited were based on rumour. So far no proof had been forthcoming; apparently his great crime lay in his accident of birth. He had remedied that as far as lay in his power by deserting Germany and adopting England as his country.

Skilfully he mentioned his indubitable charity, the unfortunate ending of his marriage, hinting that the whole of this trouble had been manœuvred by Colonel Coolter, his one-time great friend, whose downfall had shocked those who knew of it, and by his wife and her daughter in their resentment of the legal steps he had reluctantly taken to protect his honour and his self-respect.

Wellrock listened in silence to Terence Palmer, who had been one of the many witnesses called to give evidence.

Simply and clearly Terry told of the wrath that had moved him to thrash Lemberg. Of his coming to London, and ultimate arrest, how he had immediately communicated with his commanding officer, and had been released on that gentleman's mediation, the special inquiry that was held, and of the disclosures relative to Wellrock that had ensued.

Anne Raymond told her story. After she had finished, Sir Babcock Roofe, who was next called, was forced to wait, for Wellrock intervened.

Anne grew hot with shamed horror, as she heard it implied that she was this creature's ex-mistress. Terry almost wept with rage as he sat there, impotent to punish the liar.

Sir Babcock was breezy and voluble. The prisoner had nothing to say to him, nor to Lieutenant-Commander Kellow Haywoode, who took up the tale of the pre-arranged letters containing false information which he had

sent to Anne, the tracing of that news to Germany, and back again, in an incredibly short space of time, by English "agents."

"Is this—evidence?" inquired Wellrock, with a supercilious smile, as Commander Haywoode resumed his seat and some other witness was sent for.

"Goot morning, Cousin Otto." It was Gustav Lemberg who greeted him. Wellrock's smile died.

Lemberg, never an ingratiating-looking person, now presented a repulsive appearance: his broken nose leaned far over, as though whispering in his left ear, his jaw seemed out of focus, and his light-coloured eyes looked more sly and watery than usual. The whole of his body twitched violently as from St. Vitus' Dance; this nervous affection was so extreme that an orderly was needed to assist him into the room, as he entered, dragging his right leg awkwardly after him, and looking round with an imbecilic grin.

Terry had done his work well.

From this repugnant spectacle Wellrock turned in disgust. His heart sank despairingly as he wished with all his might that Palmer had killed this creature, instead of leaving Lemberg the half-witted wreck he was.

"You know Lord Wellrock?"

"Sure, he iss my cousin, Otto Frederick Schultz; he iss older than me——"

"Are you in his employ?"

Gustav looked hurt and confused at this sudden interruption.

"He gifis me money. I work for him," he explained.

"What is the nature of your work?"

"I do great work for cousin Otto for Germany," chuckled Gustav proudly.

"Gentlemen, this inquiry concerns my honour, which has been smirched by vindictive whispers. I must protest against the taking of a half-witted man's evidence," said Wellrock fervently.

"Goot morning, Cousin Otto," chortled Gustav beam-

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ingly. "You do not gif me that big reward for helping Mr. Freder

"How did you assist to destroy the *Manatee*?" he was questioned sharply.

"Like I did the *Pirogue* in Scotland; that wass goot. But Otto d

Bit by b concealed d. Otto" stood a gang of s

"Where i subected to

"Who is l

"Emily is goot Englisl Freddie. M

thing shook its head reprovingly.

For a little while longer he was cross-examined, until his twitching became so violent that he was led from the room, waving a cheerful farewell to "Cousin Otto."

Many others of Wellrock's spies who had been cleverly traced and captured were called; each one fought for himself or herself, displaying no reluctance to inform on Wellrock. Self, dominated throughout the inquiry.

Now it was over, and the judge was speaking.

Slowly and clearly he reiterated all the points in the evidence, damning in its sequence against the erstwhile banker, who grew greyer and greyer before the force of his judge's condemnation.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so you have heard what manner of man this is who stood there. It would be idle to spin words in order to paint this soul revealed in all its shameless nudity before you.

The curtain has been rung up on a setting of London forty odd years ago: the actor a boy who hated. Some hates are noble; this was not one of them. He came

among us poor and unknown; with the ingenuousness on which we have long deprecatingly prided ourselves, we extended the hand of friendship, which he grasped. Behind this friendship he shielded himself, in order that he might undermine and destroy the country to which he had sworn fealty, and us, its people. He came with this hate-engendered hope in his heart, making friendships, forming ties, not to give joy but death.

Search this soul, I say. Does it call for love and sympathy, or for sorrow and disgust?

We have suffered from myosis of the mind, believing that truth and honesty existed where there was only black treachery. This myotic disease has been swept rudely away, and while we are still bleeding from the violence of the operation which has lightened our vision, let us act, let us solemnly swear *nunquam posthac*.

As a pearl is born from pain, so let us learn through suffering. *Tranquillas etiam naufragus horret aquas.*

Let us guard against these creatures of whom Otto Frederick Schultz is a representative, shun them, exterminate them from our midst; and not welcome, house, shelter them while we spill our brave young blood to protect us from them—for such is our anomalous position to-day.

These gallant lovers are giving life's blood from their veins for their adored mistress, England; watering the ground with Royal Red to grow for her a beauteous flower. She asked for the sacrifice, and like true lovers they rushed to serve her; the blossom they would lay at her feet is sublime in its purity.

The mistress for whom they are gladly dying has been left to us, a sacred charge. We must guard her and keep her worthy of this holy gift. So let us relentlessly tear out this canker that we have weakly fostered.

We mourn our valorous dead, but can we mourn them honourably if we hold the hands, kiss the lips, nurture in our bosoms the vipers that caused their deaths?

Then indeed England's pride in the sacred blossom

grown from the blood of her lovers would be forever weighted with a stone of shame.

Tear out this canker.

Only thus can we rest in the mist-halls of our dead and reverently raise our glasses to their memory; only thus can sorrow for their deaths turn from hypocritical mourning to fierce pride and living gladness, in that we set our strong brothers out to fight.

Tear out this canker that has helped to guide the smiting guns and shrieking shells that caused England's men to stagger and scream and fall never to rise again.

Tear it out, tear it out.

We, with hearts broken in twain, mourn vanished familiar shapes and sounds, yet doubt not that our spirits which have loved so well on earth, shall live and love together after death. Are we to shake off the hand of the traitor only when we are passing from this life to join our beloved ones with their clean, loyal faith?

No, no; let us gird our loins and don our armour now, before it is too late, and drive this ever-active foe from our land. Let us stand by our men, let us stand by our dead who died that right might win.

These men, fathers, sons, brothers, husbands, lovers, who, abandoning their desks and tools, grasped bayonet and gun, and sailed gallantly over the seas, waving a cheery farewell to those who with strained brave eyes, with white faces and dry throats, with pitiful aching hearts and smiling lips, watched them go. Our men, and our boys with their smooth fresh brows and eyes, too young for battle, have fought for us; let us stand by them now, stand by them as they stood by the guns they served so well; as they stood by their King and Country, as they have stood by us.

Think of them as you saw them marching away to meet death, death screaming at them from the skies, shrieking at them from the ground, death hurled at them with the help of these Iscariots whom we foster here on our very hearths. Just as the cursed Judas repaid

Christ's love, with a crown of thorns, crucifixion and mocking smiles, so they have repaid us. Many of those lips and eyes which bade us adieu are no longer fraught with fire, but lie cold and mingled with the soil; then fight for them now, so that they may lie content, so that we may press forward unashamed to welcome back the little band of broken heroes, with faces scarred and grey, with sightless eyes, empty sleeves and crutches.

Fight for them! Let there be no prate of peace with these treacherous ones until we have silenced the blare of their brazen horn, and crushed out the bitterness and hate that keeps its grim and bloody patrol here on our very shores.

Let us destroy this danger that menaces England, so that when peace comes, it will be a sweet peace and not like slime on our souls, in that we have sheltered behind the hearts that bled for us on the battlefields, while we did nothing but prattle and sigh of the Red Disaster that swept over the world. Or, if Fate wills that we shake off our out-worn human garb before peace reigns once more, we will not leave behind us this lecherous crew, snugly ensconced in the little homes they helped to desolate.

Tear out this canker.

Are we greater than God who spoke through his prophet, Moses, saying :

Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly.

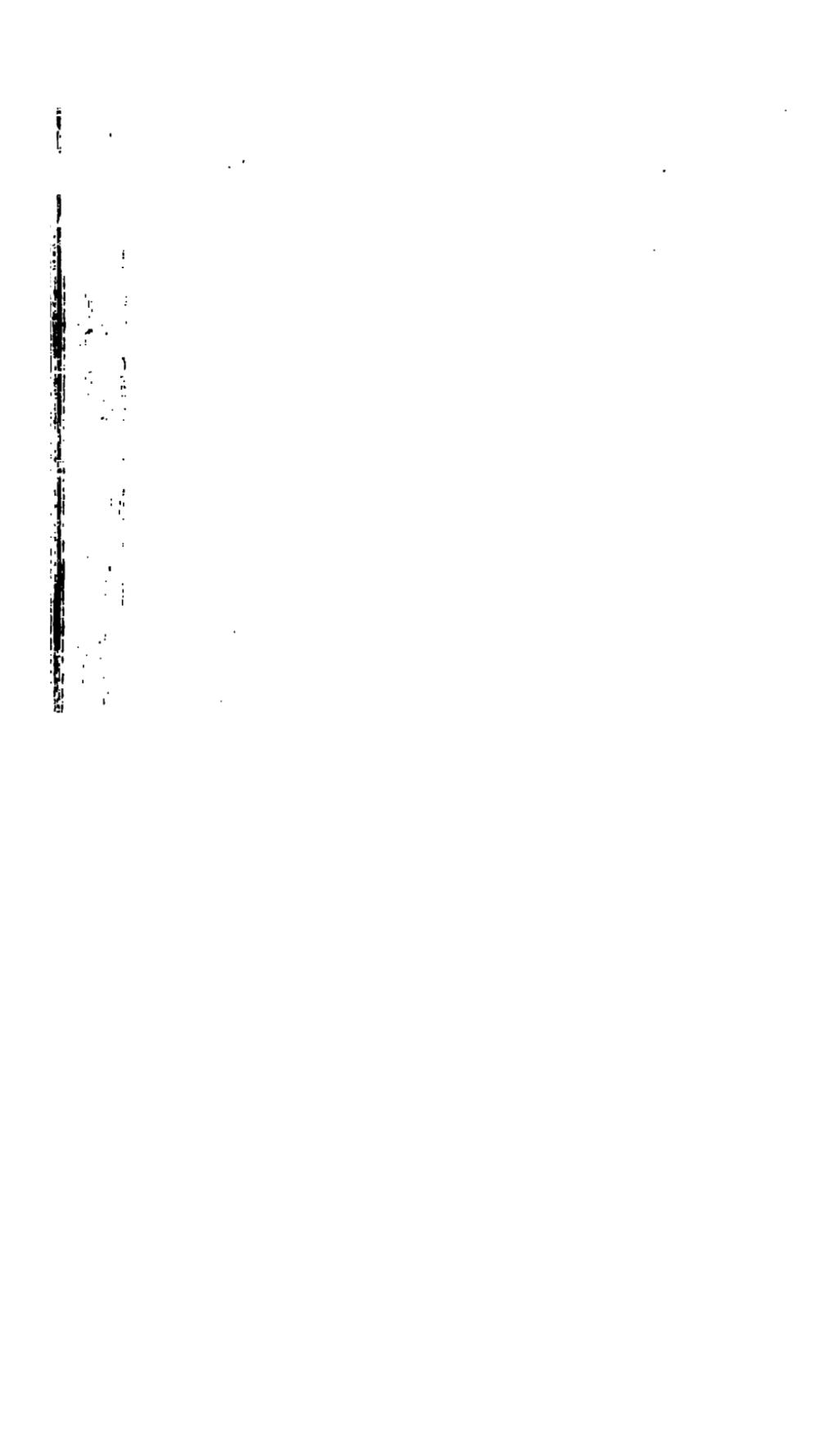
And all the people shall say "Amen."

Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person.

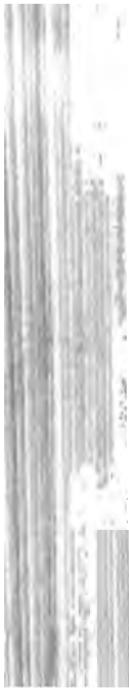
And all the people shall say "Amen."

Now, in God's name, act. Strike swiftly, strongly, relentlessly. Remember :

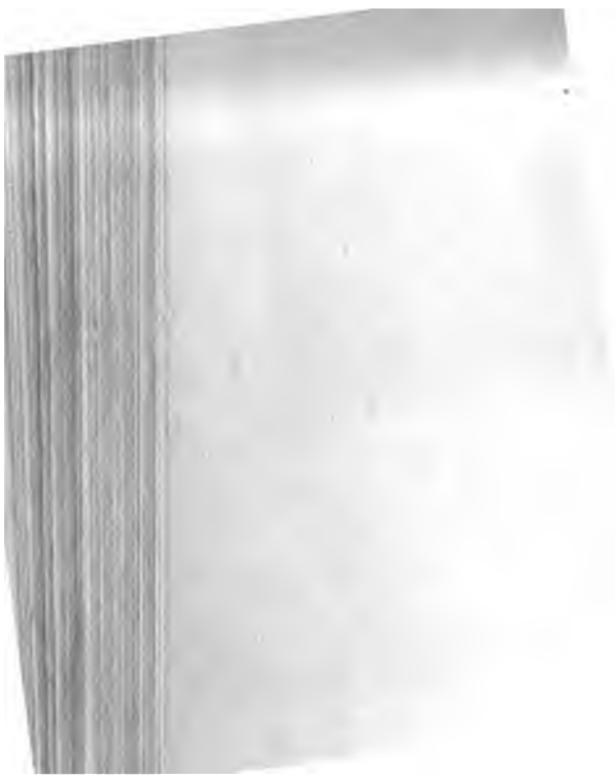
*Nulli negabimus, nulli differemus justitiam.*













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